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THE ROMANCE
OF
THE ENGLISH STAGE.

VOL. I.



THE ROMANCE
OF
THE ENGLISH STAGE.

BY
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IN TWO VOLUMES.

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Inscribed

TO

CHARLES JAMES MATHEWS, ESQ.

Introduction

CHARLES JAMES MATHIAS

PREFACE.

THERE are several collections in which the lives of the English actors and actresses have been set out. Of these the most important are Galt's 'Lives of the Players,' in which the substance, without the form, of the various theatrical autobiographies has been given, mingled, however, with much that is apocryphal; and the more recent 'History of the English Stage,' by Dr. Doran, which is brought down almost to our own day.

Nothing, however, hitherto published has professed to place before the public what may be considered the most interesting and characteristic feature of theatrical memoirs. Their chief attraction is found to be the air of personal confession, and simplicity of the revelations furnished—the *naïveté*, the humour, and almost garrulous confidence; above all, the quaint turn of expression in which everything is unfolded. A selection of such entertaining passages seemed likely to present a better idea of the player's nature and

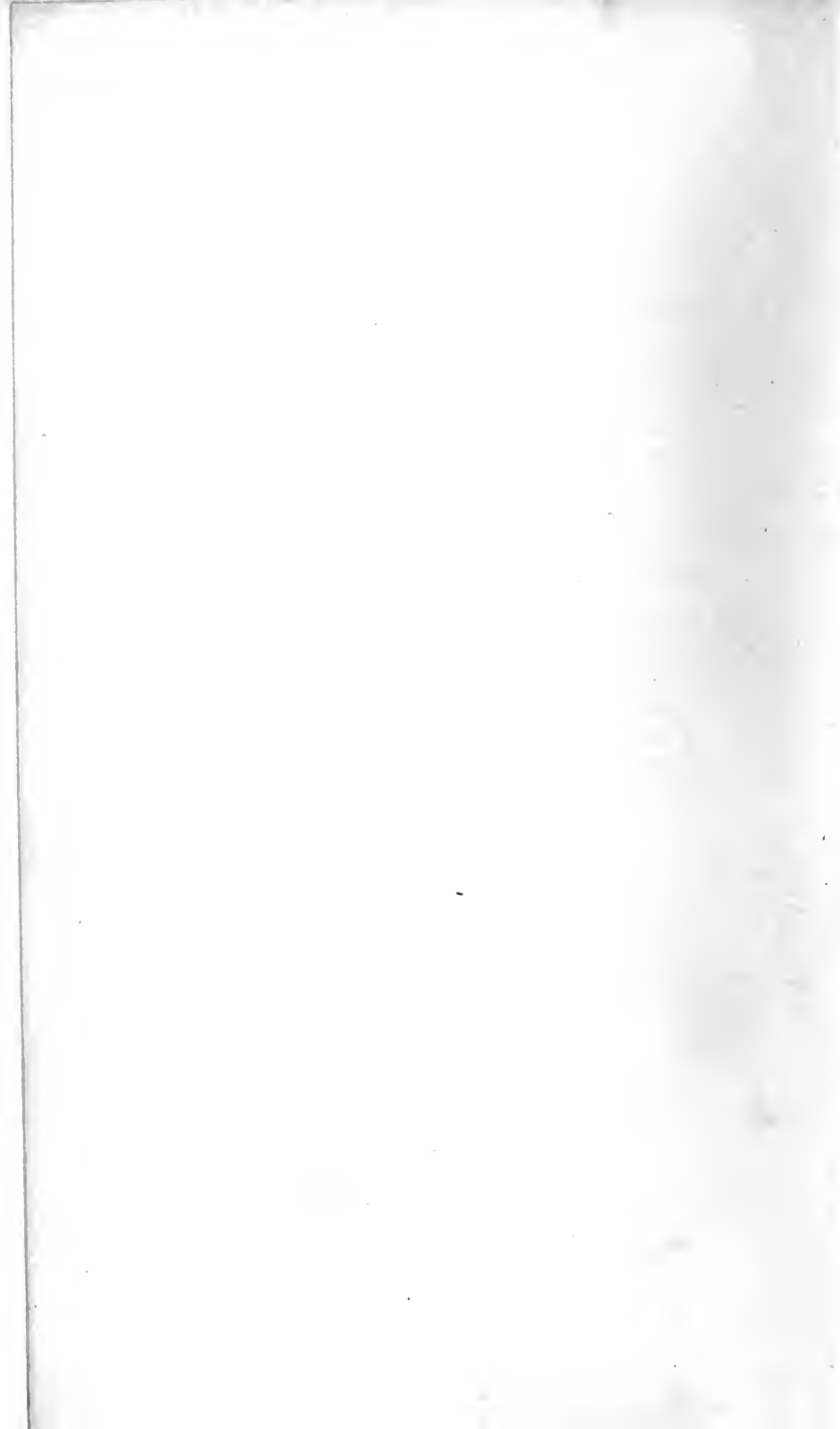
character, than the more official and historical accounts with which the public is already familiar; and this, it is hoped, has been attempted with some success in the following pages.

The carrying out of such a design naturally required large space, for the list of theatrical autobiographies is a long one. It was necessary, therefore, that some principle should direct the selection. And this has been applied by admitting such narratives only as should illustrate some special type of life or character. Thus, the story of the unfortunate Mossop exhibits the proud and luckless player,—that of Mrs. Bellamy, the career of a gay and frivolous stage beauty. Tate Wilkinson's shows the pleasant vagabondage of a "wandering patentee:" while the pathetic history of Gerald Griffin sets out the weary struggles of a young dramatist in the world of London. The fate of Miss Ray, and the romance of Miss Smithson, illustrate the tragic and melodramatic sides of stage life respectively; while the career of Elliston introduces us to the type of the airy Comedian, who plays as consistently in every-day life as though he were at the foot-lights. Sketches of the exploded "strolling" days, with pictures of what came next in degree—the respectable provincial Theatre—have been

added : and thus a tolerably complete view is obtained of the romance and humours of a fashion of life that has now almost passed away.

There are other stories which, on the ground of romance, might fairly claim a place, such as those of Macklin, Savage, Mrs. Inchbald, George Soane, and perhaps Mrs. Jordan. But space was wanting. What has been given will, it is hoped, be found sufficient to furnish a good idea of the player's life, character, and feelings, unfolded in his own words.

LONDON, 1874.



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THE ROMANCE OF THE STAGE.

CHAPTER I.

THEATRICAL MEMOIRS.

THE singular fascination which the stage has always exercised, holding under its spell every race and generation, from the rudest to the most refined, has been thought not unworthy the serious inquiry of the philosopher. There is, indeed, nothing in human society so deeply rooted, or so independent of taste or fashion : and the relish for stage entertainment is now as keen and even passionate as it was in the remote days when the finest actors flourished. Without entering very deeply into the matter, it could be shown in a few words that this ineradicable taste is the same as that which finds a gratification in the thrilling excitement of politics, in following the skirmishings and varying fortunes of a trial in the courts, or even the lively skirmishing of conversation. These are all so

many shapes of histrionic entertainment, for the most part imperfect and wanting dramatic power, but, so far as they go, offering glimpses of genuine interest. When a really exciting situation is evolved spontaneously and naturally in any of these arenas, nothing can exceed the avidity with which it is followed. Time itself is annihilated, for the hours fly by like moments: the weight of existence, for those at least on whom it lies heavily, is lifted off: and even surrounding accessories, meagre and squalid though they be, become almost glorified. But for the average mass of mankind this sort of enjoyment is out of reach. The opportunities are few; for "the people" is busy with material interests, while its intellect and cultivation is of a homely order. Indeed, the pure crowd cannot hope to see anything more dramatic than a street commotion, an altercation, or a public-house discussion. Even among the cultivated and opulent classes, the dramatic surprises of real life cannot be reckoned on. Everything dramatic is spontaneous, not to be bespoken by the influence of money or rank. An exciting and witty conversation of the give-and-take order is no more to be foreordained, than a humorist can be directed "to begin to be funny." The most dramatic debates in Par-

liament are those which have arisen out of some unprepared-for incident. Even in a *cause célèbre*, while allowing a margin for vulgar curiosity and for the mere eagerness to see what every one is eager to see, there is an indescribable sense of interest aroused when, say a plaintiff comes to be cross-examined. For this means that the human mind will be exhibited under the most varied surprises—will be forced, perhaps unwillingly, to the test of truth and falsehood, exhibiting the whole round of emotions, exciting the listeners by its repulses, and, when all seems lost, its desperate rallies. Apart from the stimulant of ordinary curiosity, the fact of so rare an exhibition going on rouses the dramatic passion and causes that press and eagerness which attend on every remarkable trial. So with a debate; so with even the poorest kind of street discussion.

This sort of entertainment, then, being rare and accidental, and “the crowd” not being likely to meet with opportunities of enjoying it, it was discovered that a sort of substitute could be offered for it, under fixed and regular conditions. A kind of reproduction of the dramatic incidents of real life was found to be as interesting as the original. Gifted men, either by inspiration or art, soon

reached to the secret, and discovered that by due selection and abstraction dramatic elements could be made to produce more exciting results than the chance occurrences of daily life. The "writing of a play" is thus the result of philosophical thought applied to unregulated accidents, and offers the combination within a short space and time, and in the most forcible fashion, of what in real life might be diluted over years of time and miles of space.

This little inquiry will show, perhaps explain, the natural fascination which the stage and its associations seem to have for mankind. We see reflected the most piquant conditions of our life, emotions, humours, as in a mirror, with all that interests our curiosity and passions. There is a tenderness and indulgence even now maintained by the very strength of old traditions, in spite of the commercial character assumed by theatrical undertakings and the mere shows they offer. This feeling has come down to us from the days of the great actors and the great plays, when early repasts allowed of assiduous attendance, night after night, in pit and boxes: from the time when the fine actor or actress was as conspicuous a personage as a prime minister, and the night of his finest impersonation as important as that of a great bill or

debate. It was the intellectual *man*, with the situations in which he figured, that excited enthusiasm: an impression independent of scenery or dress. The sense of the great character, as it were, filled the air. It was as the presence of some potentate. Even lately, when Sheridan's comedies were stereotyped in the bills and the nights of performance were counted by hundreds, there was a mysterious effect of vitality produced. We pass the doors of the playhouse with a certain reverence. Sir Peter Teazle, Mr. Joseph Surface, and other well-known characters, with all their nature and liveliness, seem to be residing within: their faces look out from photographs in the shop windows, marvellous to say with an actual intelligence and harmonious significance that would never have been inspired in modern pieces.

The most persistent grumbler and most eager assertor of the supremacy of the palmy old days of the drama still entertains a fond interest and curiosity in current theatrical events. The critiques are carefully read: they have the mysterious "orange-peel" flavour. He lingers before the playhouses, and ponders over the bills. In spite of *désillusionnement* and a steady succession of disappointments he clings to the old faith. The foot-

lights, the "borders," the glimpse of the uninviting and cavernous stage-door stirs emotions—gives a thrill, which a Mayfair hall-door held open, with a procession of entering belles, would fail to excite. The late Mr. Dickens rarely passed through the most obscure provincial town without being drawn away by the attraction of the local theatre, no matter what its quality. The once common association of the flavour of orange-peel with playhouse recollections has become scarcely appreciable by the new generation. But more mature playgoers will own to the almost magical power of such a reminder, which will call up the darkened passages, the delicious expectancy of childhood—the huge solemnity of the green curtain, which descended in waves, as it were, and with a funereal effect. There has passed away also the old-fashioned playbill, long and fluttering, with a vast deal of lustrous printer's ink, which had a peculiar savour of its own—not unwelcome—and which even soiled the kid gloves. The new theatres are boudoirs, the bills are lace-edged like valentines, and highly scented; the orange-women and their great baskets would be rudely inappropriate in such, though oranges may be seen often elegantly arranged with the dainties at the glittering bars of Messrs. Spiers

and Pond and other caterers. The curtain is usually a gaudy drop-scene, with an inelegant roller, which shuts up the closing tableau from view, marks its arrival on the boards with a hollow thud, and often displays a cheerful Italian landscape. Chocolate, mauve, crimson, amber, and other gaudy tints have been found more in keeping with the garish and elaborate shows behind. Such decorations have a sort of *mesquin* air; and there was unquestionably a truer dramatic instinct in the simplicity and indefiniteness of the huge exposure of dark green and something more significant of "the end," which it was sought to present with wholesome effect to the spectators.

In those old days there was simplicity about everything connected with the stage—and it was "THE PLAY," with the absorbing interest of the story, that so fascinated the beholder's soul. The spell was an intellectual one, though it might be conceived that the sensual element might have appealed more directly. It may be doubted if, in these days of *féeries*, so gorgeous with scenic marvels, of vast bands of young ladies, "glorified" with gold and silver armour, the charm would have been as potent. In the boy's mind the whole was a sort of ætherealised "story-book," and the

enormous and insuperable barrier that so hopelessly separated him from the figures made them seem almost like immortals. There is something in the condition of anything seen upon the stage that almost justifies this delightful hallucination. Figures and groups under the fierce light, with the gorgeous colouring and picturesque background, acquire an air heroic and supernatural which no logic will displace. The active steps of a graceful *danseuse* seem, from the boxes, to have a mysterious airiness and lightness, though on a near view they are no more than a series of leaps made with considerable muscular exertion. The steady playgoer, though disgusted with repeated disappointments from bad acting, never quite loses the old faith, and to the very last something like the child's exaggerated belief is his.

But there are other conditions, apart from their immediate presence on the stage, which lend a curious charm to actors and actresses. Lawyers, physicians, clergymen, and politicians attract no particular attention when removed from their special stages, and are most effective when busy with their callings. But actors, outside their profession, have always been an interesting class. They seem to carry into the colder and ruder

world of life some of the fitful adventures of that unreal sphere in which they figure from dusk until midnight. The experience of our time, it may be thought, helped by the practical tone of the day, shows the actor to be a being of more than average homeliness. While the ideal world behind the scenes is all show, decoration, and gorgeousness, and a commercial spirit regulates the whole, it is but natural that this artificial tone should draw down the living elements to a more prosy level than even that of everyday life. But where the spirit of pure acting obtains, where the theatre scenery is comparatively naught, and *THE PLAY*—extract of real life—with all its broad characters and humours, is the attraction, then the actors do not merely share the ordinary dignities of life, but are elevated beyond it. After the performance of some great piece like the ‘School for Scandal,’ we come away with a feeling compounded of reverence and wonder. We have seen what is not altogether a mimicry of life: the performers seem not so much actors, as sharers in the action; we think of them with curiosity and admiration; we look upon them, even follow them in the street, drawn by an irresistible attraction, much as Lamb followed the “retired Diocletian of Islington,” as he delighted to style

Quick. So have we seen an eminent member of the Français corps pursued down the whole length of a boulevard, with eagerly turning heads and scarcely repressed exclamations. This tribute may be of course paid to say one of our leading "comiques," but it takes the shape of a too familiar recognition, accompanied by a not over respectful grin. This distinction is really founded on an admission of superiority; for we feel that the interpreter of a great dramatic part is infinitely above us: whereas every one knows that, with a little training, we could figure quite as respectably as the mechanical characters who help off a sensation piece, or the diverting beings who sing and dance and joke through a popular burlesque. It would be curious to apply this standard to the case of our living English actors, and it would be found by no means a bad plan for ascertaining their position. We shall find ourselves regarding those whose fame is associated with the greater comedies and established characters with a reverence that contrasts oddly with what we entertain towards those who support indiscriminately all the multifarious characters offered to them in the ephemeral dramas of our day. The result is the outlines of their figures and faces are blurred and indistinct. They are mere privates in the

ranks, doing duty in turn : and one is about as effective as another ; whereas those who have been associated with pieces of mark stand out with the distinctness of a political character.*

“A goodly company of comedians,” says Hazlitt, in an enthusiastic essay, “a theatre royal judiciously managed, is your true Heralds’ College, the only Antiquarian Society that is worth a rush. It is for this reason that there is such an air of romance about players, and it is pleasanter to see them even in their own persons than any of the three learned professions. We feel more respect for John Kemble in a plain coat than for the Lord Chancellor on the woolsack. The most pleasant feature in the profession of a player, and which, indeed, is peculiar to it, is, that we not only admire the talents of those that adorn it, but we contract a personal intimacy with them. There is no class of society whom so

* This principle is exhibited in a minor degree even in that cloud of histrionic photographs which fill the shop windows. There are seen ranks upon ranks of the most noted performers ; and though the costumes are the most bizarre and extravagant, the wearers being “done in character,” the impression left is of the feeblest and most indistinct kind. On the other hand, a portrait, say of Mr. Clayton as Surface is of the most remarkable kind, and for its brilliance, expression, and intelligence, almost deserves a place beside the fine old theatrical mezzotints of the last century. The magic of this effect is owing to the constant familiarity of the actor with an intelligent part, which has impressed itself even on his face and bearing.

many persons regard with affection as actors. We meet them on the stage ; we like to meet them in the streets ; they almost always recall to us pleasant associations, and we feel our gratitude excited without the uneasiness of a sense of obligation." These are happily-chosen phrases, and it is within the experience of most people that they are thus affected ; though of course after a faint fashion, as these remarks were written some fifty years ago, when intellectual pieces and characters held the stage.

This little description brings us to the purpose of the present volumes, which is to show the pleasant romance that has coloured the lives of actors and actresses of true quality and genuine order. In other walks of life there is a certain selfishness which repels. The eminent lawyer or physician, as he advances to the foremost position, does not entertain as he moves. The actor of the old time, who spent all his life interpreting characters in great comedies, and who every night found his intelligence and wit spurred by a reciprocal intelligence and wit that were greater, and whose exertions were watched and checked by an intelligent audience, must have been an interesting being with gifts quite exceptional. Add to this that

entering on the profession was like starting to explore some wild and adventurous country; there were no agents, few provincial theatres, and but two great ones in London, admission into which seemed as remote as the hope of the Lord Chancellorship to a young barrister. The chance of success was desperate, and the weary probation, with its long delays and hardships, seemed to require all the shifts and talents of the adventurer. This makes the charm of the crowd of theatrical memoirs, written chiefly at the end of the last century and during the first twenty years of the present, which fill many a shelf in the library. These show that the actors were wits and humorists, pleasant companions at the tables of the wise and great, travellers and writers; while the actresses were lovely women, with a purpose beyond exhibiting their scantily-draped figures in *tableaux vivants*, where they become insipid, but striving to win approbation by the graces of intelligence, expression, and character. Most of these ladies had their history and offered lives of curious incident. The lives of few women in any other class are found associated with such adventures. Heroines of elopements and abductions—the causes of sanguinary duels—the pursued of men of rank and

fashion ; now rolling in wealth and magnificence ; now carried to sponging-houses and sunk in misery ; now mixing with wits and ladies of quality ; now the favourites of kings and princes—they passed through all the most opposite vicissitudes. Actors also are found to be subject to the same alternations of life—of prosperity, adversity, and misery—and this life usually presented the most curious complexions of adventure. It is strange that the theatrical history of other countries, and notably of France, should not have the same adventurous interest. With a few exceptions, the lives of foreign players show the regular and perhaps uninteresting progression found in other professions. But a more remarkable difference is found in the wealth of theatrical memoirs for which England is distinguished, and which make a very characteristic department of modern literature. Its attraction is indeed increased by the fact that with the decay of acting the taste for writing as well as for reading such records has decayed also, and though some recent actors have set down their recollections, these are of such a poor and meagre sort, wanting in colour and substance, that they have found few readers, and are not worthy of a great support. The reason

of this would appear to be, that the modern actor's life, in proportion as his art has fallen away from the old high ideal, offers nothing striking or genuine; while the spurious exhibitions which now engage his exertions remove him altogether from opportunities of struggle and steady honourable advancement, the record of which it would be interesting to read.

It is indeed extraordinary the variety of entertainment that is to be found in these adventures. Tate Wilkinson, Mrs. Bellamy, Colman, O'Keeffe, Reynolds, Geo. Frederick Cooke, Elliston, and Mathews are perhaps the most genuine and interesting of the whole. Wilkinson's biography, taken as a free, unaffected confession, is a picture of a mind revealing itself in the most natural way, defying grammar and even words themselves, and taking the shortest, straightest, readiest way to unfold his thoughts. The infinite variety, the strange language and ideas, the shrewd judgment and observations, the quaint remarks, and the naïve revelation of mean and paltry motives; with the pleasant sketches of the manners and characters of the day,—this curious compound, entitled 'Memoirs of Tate Wilkinson,' in three volumes, with its sequel, 'The Wandering Patentee,' also in three volumes,

deserves, as it seems to me, to be placed first in rank.* Reynolds and O'Keeffe's may perhaps be placed next, written in a dashing, jovial style, full of droll, convivial stories. The valuable portion of O'Keeffe's memoirs are his early recollections, which stretch back very far, especially his sketches of the old-world manners, which are done picturesquely. The younger Colman's are entertaining, and much in the same rollicking key as Reynolds's, but they make only a fragment and have little to do with the stage. Mrs. Bellamy's story is very rambling, and at times incoherent, but it is full of details, and is marked by that curious token of the garrulous chronicler—an exaggeration of trifling matters, the passing by or suppression of important things. It exhibits pictures of the most dismal alternations in a beautiful actress's life—wealth, splendour, jewels, applause, succeeded by disgrace, bailiffs, sponging-houses, and absolute destitution. A pendant for which history may be found in the story of Mrs. Baddeley, another beautiful actress, but a woman of inferior degree in every respect. She ran a wild, dissipated course, with the same alternations of wealth and wretchedness, the

* At this moment the six little tomes are very scarce, especially the sequel, which is almost *introuvable*.

jewels and rich dresses—being succeeded by the inevitable bailiffs and the sponging-house. A third story—that of the handsome Mrs. Sumbel—offers much the same character; but, like that of Mrs. Baddeley, is but fitfully connected with the stage. It is curious that ladies of this description should have been too illiterate to write their own stories, which were put together, under their direction, by some indifferent hack writers. There is, however, a native genuine vulgarity about them, and a rambling incoherence, which proves that they were dictated or inspired by the subjects of the narratives. Yet, though written under such conditions, there is present the charm of candour and a certain sincerity—an eagerness to confess too much, rather than too little. In the more modern theatrical memoirs there is an affectation and restraint—a wish to place the narrator in the best view—to which is sacrificed all freedom and interest: the result, indeed, as in the case of such specimens as the ‘Memoirs of Lee Lewes’ and ‘Edwin’s Eccentricities,’ being almost blank. Lee Lewes, as Mr. Forster notes, was well acquainted with Goldsmith, Garrick, and other men of note—yet there is not a single particular about them in his book. He has nothing to tell. His mind seems to have

been of the "valet" order, and all that it retained were some low green-room stories, without point or interest, which he seems to have retailed over a pipe and glass to the Grub Street assistant who was to fashion them into a book. The 'Memoirs of Grimaldi,' which Mr. Dickens from motives of good-nature and charity introduced to the public, are perhaps the dullest of this class; and though written with diligence and care, show effectually that there is a prosy side to stage life, and that the mere annals of a dramatic career are more uninteresting than almost anything that can be related. Mere records of engagements, new plays, and characters performed, seem all-important to the actor, and indeed ought to be, in one sense; but to the reader such are bald and unwelcome. The poorest specimen of this class is perhaps the memoirs of one Donaldson, which, though running to many pages, contains little or nothing of recollection or observation. With this must be classed the late Paul Bedford's little book, which has some droll stories, but nothing of the least importance. The memoirs of the elder Mathews, by his widow, are little more than a mass of materials for a memoir—a vast number of letters, newspaper cuttings, and "good stories," which swell the whole record to four

bulky volumes, and make nearly 2000 pages of print. Mrs. Mathews had that diffuseness in her style which belongs to the stage—most players when writing down facetious stories expanding the description with what seem to them droll turns of their own, which are perhaps modelled on comic passages in dramas. Holcroft's are of value, being written by a trained *littérateur*, and offer some curious alternations of fortune. Raymond's 'Life of Elliston' is a really singular book, written in a style congenial to the eccentricities of its hero, which, though often transgressing literary taste and decorum, overflows with a rollicking spirit. At the bottom of the list must be placed the pretentious memoirs of 'Harriet, Duchess of St. Albans,' by Mrs. Cornwall Baron Wilson—which contain very little.

It would be impossible to particularise all that has been contributed to this class of literature. It will be seen, however, from what is now about to be presented to the reader, that the incidents of the player's life—in most instances related by himself—offer pleasant entertainment.

CHAPTER II.

THE STROLLER'S LIFE.

THE state of the stage about one hundred years ago, and its condition at present, furnish a curious contrast. Now it is an important profession, with an enormous following. "Professionals" are to be counted by thousands, and theatres by hundreds; while the luxury of the age has enlarged the meaning of the words "the stage," formerly representing only what was purely intellectual, into whatever can entertain the eye or ear. Everything, indeed, that can be produced upon a raised platform so as to be conveniently seen by a large crowd, seems to be included within the term of "the stage." The shows of the music-hall, gymnasts, tumblers and grotesque dancers, jugglers, delineators, mimics, comic singers—all have found a place upon the "stage"; while decorators, scene-painters, adjusters of the lime-light, gas-men, &c., form distinct and subsidiary callings. The system of 'farming' has developed a special form of ability,

displayed in the contracting for playbills, in dramatic agency and touring arrangements, advertising and the like. So that, in fact, it may be said that all that concerns the drama has grown to be of more importance than the drama itself.

In the last century two large theatres, and a small house allowed to be open for a few months in the year, were all that London could offer. A theatre of some repute at Bath, the two Dublin theatres, and one at Edinburgh, exhausted the list of first-class theatres in the kingdom. On what were known as "the circuits"—the York, Liverpool and others—were found a number of small houses, very small and rude in their appointments, often some "converted" coach-house or chapel, and but rarely built for the purpose. These scarcely deserved the name of theatre, and were indeed only shapes more commodious and permanent of the ordinary barn in which strollers performed. Perhaps a couple of dozen completed the list of such places. To make the contrast more striking there will be found in the morning papers some six feet of theatrical advertisement, exhausting every device of claptrap and self-commendation to call attention to the play of the night. In the last century a space of a couple of inches square was

all that was necessary to carry out the purpose of such an announcement, viz., to declare what play would be performed that night and what were the names of the actors.

And yet, with these evidences of activity in our day, it may be safely said that the drama of the last century, though deficient in playhouses, advertisement, lime-light, &c., occupied a larger space in social life, had more influence, and filled the public mind more satisfactorily than does the huge histrionic organisation of our time. This may seem something of a paradox, but a little reflection will show its truth. Even a single great actor or actress—such is the expansiveness of genius—is in himself sufficient to supply ample entertainment to a whole generation. All can find opportunity to see him, just as nearly every one of ordinary intellect and capacity contrived to see Mrs. Siddons or Garrick; and the result in the shape of intellectual entertainment was more profitable and less costly than the present bewildering system. Expense and show—costly dresses, &c., exhibited under strong light—it is now discovered with some astonishment, do not pay so well as the simple unadorned gifts of a simple and solitary player of ability. The “sensation” drama which half-a-

dozen years ago was the rage, has palled on the public taste after the shortest conceivable reign; while a strong-lunged tragedian of somewhat coarse power travels round from one provincial theatre to another, and draws vast and tumultuous audiences to hear some rude, but sound performances of the legitimate drama. In short, at some cost, we have learned the lesson that "the play's the thing" which at all times and seasons attracts and will attract; while shows and accessories, however magnificent, will offer but limited attractions, and these only for the vulgar.

It is curious that the two extremes of respect and contempt should have always attended the stage, though it must be said that for the latter the stage itself is mainly accountable. In the presence of fine acting, respect, dignity, awe, admiration are excited in the highest degree; while the perverted shapes of histrionic exhibition produce a curious feeling compounded of derision, tedium, and good-natured toleration. The reason of this would seem to be, that where vast publicity is invited the responsibility and risk are in the same proportion, and the contrast between the quality of the entertainment and the conspicuous position in which it is presented at once challenges a sort of

contempt. Hence the low estimation in which those theatrical Pariahs known as STROLLERS have always been held : the very name being one of depreciation.

Strollers were the first in the line of those spurious representatives of the drama, whose connection with it does not go beyond the art of self-exhibition ; and their legitimate successors are surely the race of burlesque performers or mimics, with such actors as try to extort laughter by gags, antics, and devices which have no connection with the character in hand. It might seem odd that the strollers, who, after all, honestly strove to carry out their purpose according to such lights as they enjoyed, should have encountered such obloquy. But it was felt that the publicity they sought should be supported by more than good intentions, and that ability and training at least should be present. The immediate cause of the contempt that pursued them was the absurd contrast offered between the grand characters they undertook—the kings, queens, heroes, &c.—the noble sentiments they uttered, and the wretched supporters of these characters. And in justice it must be said, that audiences were not so much

affected by the meagre and squalid accessories, which were out of keeping with the regal and heroic state presented, as by the discrepancy between the actor's abilities and the part he represented.

The incidents of the strollers' life—their poverty, mean shifts, "the candle ends," the desperate straits for food and clothes—have furnished satirists and caricaturists with some of their most effective pictures—the subject offering infinite opportunity for humorous treatment. Churchill, Scarron, and Hogarth have revelled in these details, and left—the first specially—a pitiless dissection of these infirmities. His scathing lines will be remembered; and indeed nothing more inviting in the way of bitter satire could be conceived than the stroller, who was classed by the village constables with gipsies and vagabonds, and who was generally some youth who had run away from the counter or the desk to lay rude hands on Shakespeare.

It is almost painful to follow the tale of humiliations which made up the career of these hapless creatures. It would almost seem that no class of the community ever passed through such a probation to earn miserable and uncertain wages. Yet, after all, the grand ideal was before them,

like an ignis fatuus, and sustained the genuine probationer: the more earthy followers found themselves hopelessly committed and could not draw back. To have been a stroller was a fatal hindrance to any other calling, while the shifty character of the life hopelessly demoralised inferior natures. On the other hand, no finer probation could be conceived for the sincere student who was possessed of real theatrical genius. To such preparation Kemble and Siddons and Kean owed half their later triumphs.

The mortifications and hardships of the tribe were endless. The memoirs are full of stories of their being hunted by beadles from towns and villages—of their lying in bed till night, their ordinary clothes being seized by the landlady for rent—of their pulling up turnips in convenient fields to stay their hunger; and a fair idea of the profit to be gained by this calling may be gathered from the not unfrequent sharing of the night's receipts among the members of the company, viz., a shilling and "*six pieces of candle ends*" falling to each.* But Stephen Kemble told the

* "I remember," said Mr. King in the green-room of Drury-lane, "that when I had been a short time on the stage I performed one night King Richard, gave two comic songs, played in an interlude, danced

late Mr. John Taylor a story which, though trifling, is profoundly significant of what used to be the social estimation of the stroller. "He once told me," he says, "that while he was walking in a town in Ireland with the mayor, who *honoured* him with his arm, one of the inferior actors bowed to the magistrate with the most obsequious humility, but did not attract any notice. The man then ran before them, and at another convenient spot repeated his humiliating obeisance. Still, however, he was passed without observation. Again he ran to a place where he thought he was more likely to draw attention, but was equally unsuccessful. Anxious to testify his respect for the mayor, he tried again at another convenient point, manifesting, if possible, a more obsequious courtesy. At length the obduracy of the mayor softened, though not subdued in pride; he turned his head to look at the persevering actor, but without even a nod of recognition, and hastily uttered, 'I see you, I see you,' which the poor actor considered as an act of gracious condescension."

a hornpipe, spoke a prologue, afterwards harlequin, in a sharing company; and, after all this fatigue, *my share came to threepence and two pieces of candle.*"—*Everard's Memoirs*, p. 62.

Many of these strollers who afterwards attained a respectable position on the stage, have told the history of their early trials with the utmost frankness; indeed, seeming to look back with a sort of good-humour to the very serious privations of this period of their lives. Bernard, who was secretary to the extinct Beefsteak Club, has left some very entertaining recollections of this kind, while Ryley, a professed "itinerant," as he called himself, has, in very rambling style, given a rude, but truthful picture of the coarser side of such experiences. There was a dismal uniformity in these reports. The eager neophyte who had run away to join the profession was invariably confounded at finding the manager some low, ill-kept, ill-dressed personage of the coarsest manners, dashed with a singular eccentricity, which, oddly enough, seemed inseparable from a position of command. He found the company in a state of helpless destitution, the terms of engagement usually being either "on salary," when the performer was to receive about eight or nine shillings a week, or "on sharings," when his gains were to be speculative. In either case, the result was generally of the same disastrous kind. After the first week there was no salary, and the company,

in debt to the whole village, were told they must share and "take what was going." Or, if they had originally elected to share, the six candle ends and a few pence were impartially distributed among them. There were always loud murmurs and hostility to the manager, who was often suspected of fraud, he claiming so many shares for his scenery, dresses, &c. But in most instances this was unjust, as he was usually the most destitute of the party. Indeed, the manager's almost invariable embarrassment was to find an embargo laid upon his scenes and dresses for debt, while his actors were expecting their wages from him with which to pay their over-due lodging and board. They were thus unable to set out for the next town where races and assizes were going on, and where there was some faint hope that cash might come in. In this dead-lock an arrangement was usually come to : some trunks and dresses were left as a security, or the most confiding member of the party was induced to advance a few hoarded pounds. The sufferings of the members of the corps were yet more severe; they had to extricate themselves as best they could. Indeed, the life of these poor wayfarers seemed to be uncoloured by anything but hardship and per-

secution, and it seems amazing how it could have had the slightest attraction. But their perseverance and endurance, worthy of a higher reward, could only have been supported by the hope of passing through all this squalor and privation to the grand goal which lay at the end.

Everything seemed to conspire to degrade the follower of the rickety Thespian cart. In time he was found competing for the office of "orator," as it was called—or bill-distributor—which in the town or village was entitled to be remunerated by a shilling, in the country by two. The duties of this office consisted in waiting on the hucksters and shopkeepers, in opening relations with the butlers and footmen at "great houses," who were to contrive to bring these programmes to the notice of the owners. Any one who would follow the shifts and degradations of the calling will find them set out in the dismal narrative of "an unfortunate son of Thespis," by one Edward Everard. There he will follow the poor stroller walking from town—his wife "lying in" on the way—defrauded by managers, bullied by roughs, receiving little glimpses of hope when Sir Sydney Smith, or "Lord Erskine's brother, the Hon. Henry Erskine," allowed his name to be put at the top of

the bill : now with Mr. Thornton, who "managed sixteen theatres;" now with "Jemmy Whitely," who goes off with his pockets full of money and leaves "the sharers" without a farthing. In a company "at Evesham in the vale, pleasant in itself, but not so to us, with about eighteen men, twelve women, three good and *constant* musicians, handsome scenes and superb dresses, I did not get four shillings a week. Mr. Durrivan, a man possessed of a happy dry humour, made me laugh one night when I observed to him that he had got on a most elegant rich suit of clothes. 'Ay,' said he, lifting up the flap of his vest, which covered his knees, and the crimson velvet could scarcely be seen for the gold lace and spangles—'Ay! *starving in pomp!*'" The poor wretches struggled on, yet sometimes found a Samaritan.

One of these well-experienced highway managers, one Ryley, whose nine volumes have become almost *introuvable*, tells the story of their trials very simply and naturally. And indeed it is worth noting how these poor adventurers battled on in the face of reverses which would have crushed another who was of a different profession. The reader will notice in all these confessions a rude but satisfactory form of expression, as though their

sufferings came back on them vividly as they wrote, and caused the words to crowd to their lips. He thus describes strolling management:—

“I had been scarcely a month or so there, before they had to throw, as was customary, for the benefits. I wished to decline, alleging the short time I had been in the company, and that there was no partner to go with me; then being told that the nights were all fixed, and that I could possibly have no other chance; at last reluctantly I consented, and, as ill chance would have it, won the first night. As I had purposely been laid on the shelf, a little vanity, more than the hopes of gain, urged me to venture; the trouble and any additional expense I knew must be all my own, and, if there should be any profit, I had to share it with an undeserving set; I therefore took no pains about it. I flattered myself that I should have an opportunity of showing myself to some advantage, which, in the end, might answer some end, and that I should have the secret satisfaction of mortifying them a little in my turn. As I foresaw, so it fell out: there was hardly the bare nightly charges. After playing Touchstone, Young Philpot, and dancing, I went home penniless. I had lodged and boarded

with an old woman, who kept a creditable public-house; she was at the play; I was unavoidably in her debt. I never was more cast down and dispirited; I could with difficulty muster courage to open the door. When I entered, I shall never forget my reception. I believe she saw my backwardness: 'Come, come along,' says she; 'bless your dear little legs.' This was a wonderful cordial to my drooping spirits: I never stood in greater need of one; but she nor her husband would be satisfied, till out of his friendly bottle I had taken two cordials; then told me there was a little fowl just boiled and ready for my supper; not to be uneasy about anything, but make myself comfortable; adding, 'I see now plainly the reason of some of them backbiting you, but they will be glad, now, to come cap in hand to you.' Her words proved true; for next morning, early, two of my greatest enviers waited on me, to request that I would play a particular character, and dance for their benefit the next night. My good landlady told them their own. I confess I secretly triumphed in my turn, and then, being fully satisfied, complied with every one's desire till the last night: the manager told me next morning, that all the scenes and dresses must be taken down and

packed up and sent to Stamford the next day, but that as I had had no benefit, and done so much for the company, they had all made an offer to stop and play next night gratis, for my benefit, if, under such circumstances, I could do anything. I gave out and performed the 'Stratagem' and 'Lying Valet,' to about ten pounds, under every disadvantage, and my whole expenses did not amount to ten shillings."

"The sharing plan," says the manager Ryley, "was always my aversion ; to remedy this I made a proposal to try the town of Ludlow upon small salaries of half a guinea, fifteen shillings, and a guinea, according to the merit and utility of the different performers. This was cheerfully agreed to, and we arrived in safety at this romantically picturesque place.

"Having fixed my wife and little Fanny in a delightfully rural lodging, I thought it behoved me to pay attention to 'the property,' which was on its way. Accordingly I walked towards the suburbs leading to Worcester, in hopes of meeting the waggons which contained the scenery, wardrobe, &c. At the entrance of the town I observed a concourse of people collected round a four-wheeled carriage which moved slowly, and

on its approach I found to my surprise it was 'the property'; and such an exhibition! Had the carter endeavoured to excite a mob he could not have done it more effectually than by the manner in which he had packed the load. Some scenes and figures belonging to a pantomime lay on the top of the boxes, which were numerous, and piled very high. To keep them steady he had placed a door on which was painted in large characters '*Tom's Punch House*' in front of the waggon; this soon gave a title to the whole. Upon the uppermost box and right over the door was a giant's head of huge dimensions, whose lower jaw, being elastic hung, opened with every jolt of the carriage. By the side of this tremendous head rode our large mastiff, who, enraged at the shouts of the mob, barked and bellowed forth vengeance.

"The letters on the door had of course stamped it for a puppet-show, to corroborate which the impudent carter, somewhat in liquor, had placed a pasteboard helmet on his head, whilst with awkward gesticulation he thumped an old tambourine, to the no small amusement of the spectators. To finish the farcical physiognomy of this fascinating group, Bonny Long, his wife, and nine children, sat in the rear, Bonny in a large cocked hat, his wife with a

child at her breast, wrapped in a Scotch plaid, and the other eight in little red jackets. As soon as I beheld the comic effect produced by this *tout ensemble*, I slipped down a back street. I was waiting at the theatre with some impatience, when the stage-keeper came running to inform me that the waggon was overturned and Mr. Long killed. In an instant I was on the spot, and sure enough there lay the contents of the cart, and Bonny Long under the whole. The crowd had considerably increased; some were humanely employed in lifting off boxes, in order to release the sufferer, others supported his wife, who though safe from the fall, was in fits for the fate of her husband, whilst the eight little brats in scarlet jackets ran about like dancing dogs prepared for a stage exhibition. Poor Long was at length liberated with no other inconvenience than what was occasioned by the suffocating dust arising from the old scenes, which had completely preserved him from the pressure of the boxes. The only misfortune this accident caused was the death of our watchful mastiff. This noble creature, when the waggon overturned, kept the men at bay lest his master's property should be purloined, till a blacksmith, who had been drawn from his anvil and stood gazing

with the sledge-hammer on his shoulder, gave the poor animal a blow behind the ear, which put a sudden period to his existence. This callous Cyclops was at my suit arraigned on the following day before a magistrate, who acquitted him on the blacksmith's plea of self-defence.

“The theatre was a miserably poor place, and when filled would scarcely contain twenty pounds. We opened it the following Monday with the comedy of ‘The Beaux’ Stratagem.’ The receipts amounted to £5, and though the company were much reduced, I found a continuance of such receipts would disable me from paying the salaries. The second and third nights were not much better, and the third week I found myself under the unpleasant necessity of addressing the company and placing them on the old establishment. The houses instead of improving went from bad to worse; dissatisfaction generally prevailed—‘the sharing was not an existence.’ This I very readily allowed, but surely no blame could be attached to me: in vain I urged the small receipts and heavy disbursements. One more witty than the rest chose to exercise his humour at my expense, and on the following day was seen walking down with his five-shilling share in a canvas purse at the end

of his stick placed over his right shoulder ; *jocularly* informing every one who inquired, that his last week's share was so heavy, his arm ached with its weight. This sarcasm hurt me greatly. Ludlow races now approached and great expectations were formed : overflowing houses were promised, and I vainly hoped it would be in my power to make amends for the miserable pittance they had hitherto received. But here, as in most of my undertakings, fortune dashed down the cup of hope just as I was raising it to my lips—on the first race night, a ball opposed the theatre, and the receipts were so trifling it was not thought proper to perform. To make amends for this I applied to the stewards to patronise the next night, but this could not be effected ; the grand ordinary dinner was to be that evening, and would detain the company till a late hour. As there were only two days' races I was now at my wits' end : the only probable way of drawing them to the theatre was to perform in the morning. Again I waited on the stewards and obtained their consent and promised attendance. Accordingly the 'Castle of Andalusia' was advertised by desire of the stewards of the race, to begin at eleven o'clock. This new and unpleasant time of performance was particularly irksome—to shut out

daylight and to substitute candles for the glorious sun on a hot summer's morn appeared little better than sacrilege ; but there was no alternative between this and empty benches. The time arrived, and with this astonishing patronage we raised eleven pounds. The benefits were now our only resource, and even that bore a melancholy aspect."

He now changes the scene :—

"At this time I received a letter from Mr. Smith, one of the proprietors of the Wolverhampton theatre, couched in terms of strong persuasion ; he was certain, if I brought my company to the fair, receipts could not be less than two hundred pounds. This was a strong temptation : I consulted the performers. They were as sanguine as myself, and, as I never looked on the dark side of things, I speedily embarked in this troublesome and expensive undertaking ; but the anxiety of mind that attended the removal of this unfortunate company, with their still more unfortunate manager, is indescribable. We arrived without accident, and the theatre was advertised to open on the Monday. Had I been as well acquainted as I am now with the description of people who attend fairs, especially merry-making fairs, I should never have undertaken this disastrous journey. Three, four, and five pounds were

the customary receipts. In a state of mind bordering on distraction I went over to Birmingham, and, by way of *forcing* a house for the last night, engaged Messrs. Grist, Banks, and Barrymore to perform in 'Othello' and 'Rosina,' for which I was to give them each a guinea and pay the chaise-hire. The receipts of that night, with all this *great acting*, amounted to seven pounds!!! out of which I had to pay these gentlemen three guineas, besides travelling expenses!!! I have known actors, aye and poor ones too, who would have received the three guineas with some appearance of regret; nay, there are those who would not have taken them at all: but these great people were superior to such little prejudices. They not only received them with ease and good-humour, but the greatest man of the three made a famous good story of it, to the great delight of his auditors, in the Birmingham green-room next day. Yet so blind was I to the narrowness of this conduct, that the supper bill (no small one, it may be supposed when 'tis recollected who composed the party) I discharged under the idea of gentlemanly hospitality—a prejudice which ought to have died with my shipwrecked fortune. The hour of departure arrived, and thirty pounds, the whole of the week's receipts, were all that I had to

satisfy the actors, by lending each a little, and a long train of incidental expenses incurred by the journey, besides chaises to carry us back, and maintenance on the road. This was the greatest difficulty I had ever experienced ; to wait upon the different tradesmen with apologies instead of money was, to a man of my temperament, grating beyond all description. However, there was no alternative : when I told my story, they were gentle and kind, and would patiently wait my own time of payment. Credit for chaises to transport us back was likewise cheerfully granted, and we left Wolverhampton, after this inauspicious week, minus about fifty pounds.

“The benefits commenced at Ludlow, and each performer managed to clear a trifle ; but Bonny Long outdid them all. As soon as his benefit was announced Mrs. Long washed her eight children and dressed them in the scarlet spencers which never made their appearance except at benefits and their first arrival in a town. At the head of this little tribe she paraded the streets, in her Scotch plaid, with a large bundle of playbills, and solicited custom at every respectable dwelling. The novelty of these *little red runabouts*, added to the good-humour and affability of the father, brought an overflowing

house ; and so much was honest Bonny respected, there was not an individual in the theatre who did not rejoice in his success."

Other seasons equally disastrous follow :—

"*Gloucester*.—By way of raising one decent house, I endeavoured to get a play patronised ; and, as luck would have it, the Earl of — and several persons of distinction were then at the Hop Pole, where I understood they intended to remain a few days. This incident completely routed the blue devils, who had of late been my constant companions. I dressed myself in a handsome suit of black, with my best laced ruffles ; my hair was put in the most exact trim, and into Fossegate Street I bent my way. I have always remarked that the time to carry a point which depends merely on good-humour is about half an hour after the cloth is drawn : I hit this period to a nicety. I followed a puppy-looking servant upstairs ; I heard him announce me as Mr. Romney, manager of the theatre ; upon which the whole company burst into an immoderate fit of laughter, at the same time repeating the word 'manager !' in a manner that gave me to understand they entertained no great reverence for the character. 'Oh, the ma-na-ger !' continued his drawling Lordship, when laughter

would permit; 'show the manager in. We shall have some fun, my Lady.' Filled with contempt, I was turning to make a precipitate retreat, when the servant threw open the door and discovered me. 'Walk in, Mr. Ma-na-ger!' cried his Lordship, nodding significantly at a baronet who sat at the bottom of the table and was leisurely picking his teeth. A degree of disappointment was apparent. I dare say they had painted the manager as a motley-dressed man adorned with tinsel, who would servilely cringe and bow for the favour of being insulted by such honourable brutes. Perceiving their mistake, with a bold steady step I walked up to my Lord and laid before him a list of plays. 'Oh aye! Plays. My Lady, will you bespeak a play?'—'Why really, my Lord, I have no idea of strollers—pray, Mr. Manager, what sort of a set are yours?' During this time her Ladyship's eye, through a quizzing glass, was fixed upon me with steadyeffrontery. The baronet asked, 'Have you any fine girls in your troop, Mr. What's-your-name?'"

After more of this treatment he made an indignant protest and retired. When he reached home he found a note from one of the ladies of the party, complimenting him on his spirit and inclosing ten pounds.

His cheerfulness and perseverance were at last rewarded, and he emerged from this life of shifts and degradation. Though he never was "well off," he was removed from want, and was often kindly assisted by higher members of the profession.

To this grotesque race of strolling managers belonged "Jemmy Whitely" and Penchard, of whom most leading players had stories to tell. There was a family likeness in their peculiarities; shifts and habitual debts and difficulties encourage a habit of wheedling and jocosity, intended to humour the pressing creditor; and this treatment, being sometimes found successful, may have been fostered by practice. Gentlemen "who live by their wits," as it is called, have found this manner a valuable auxiliary. Mr. Bernard thus describes one of the fraternity:—

"I was now," he says, "introduced to a room fitted up in an inn, and Manager Penchard. Here was the old system of paper wings, hoop chandelier, superannuated scenery—fiddler, property-man, and lamp-lighter identical, with a company five in number, the first and worst of whom was the manager himself.

"Mr. Penchard had been a manager fifty years,

and, for that reason, continued to play all the juvenile characters. He was very tall, but stooped through infirmity. The gout was in both his legs, Shakespeare in his head, and money in his heart. He was a determined miser, and an actor by confederacy, that is, with the assistance of a remarkable peruke, which had been worn, as he averred, by Colley Cibber in 'The Fops.' It was such a wig as would now grace the head of a Lord Chief Justice; and in this, I was informed, he played the whole round of his characters—Hamlet, Don Felix, Lord Townley, and Zanga; so that he had obtained the familiar title throughout England of 'Penchard and his Wig.' On our way to his lodgings we were met by a member of the company, who knew Scott, and begged to join us, as he had a favour to ask of his superior, which might not otherwise be granted.

"On reaching the house, we were shown upstairs into a dark, dingy, narrow little room, with a bed in one corner and an immense chest in the other. We found the manager seated in an elbow-chair, muffled in a morning-gown, which looked like an adaptation of a Venetian tunic, by the side of a three-legged table at which he was eating his breakfast. This meal consisted of a

halfpenny roll and a halfpenny-worth of milk. At our entrance, he slightly inclined his head, with a "Good morning, gentlemen," and continued his meal, leaving us upon our legs—but I forget, there were no more chairs in the room. Mr. Scott then introduced me to him; and the manager commenced a conversation by giving me some valuable advice as to the life I was about to embrace. In the intervals of his catarrh and lumbago, he at length grew facetious; and the person who accompanied us, thinking this to be a good opportunity, stepped up to his table, and said, with some hesitation, he had a trifling favour to ask. The manager's face elongated in an instant, and every wrinkle disappeared like a sudden calm at sea. 'A favour, Mr. Singer,' he mumbled; 'a trifling favour, eh! You are always asking trifling favours, sir, and such as are enough to ruin me. What is it you want this time?'—'The loan of a shilling, if it's not inconvenient.'—'A what?'—'A shilling, sir!'—'What can you do with your money!' At length he reluctantly drew a leathern pouch from his side, and selected a shilling from the silver it contained, which holding an instant between his finger and thumb, he remarked with some asperity—'You will

remember, Mr. Singer, it was but last Saturday you shared three-and-sixpence, and this is Wednesday !'

"After Mr. Singer had made a proper acknowledgment and retired, the old gentleman detailed to us his system of living, as a comment upon what he termed the ruinous extravagance of the age. Threepence a day, we were informed, supplied him with subsistence. In the morning, his roll and milk, as we observed ; at dinner, a rasher of bacon and an egg ; his tea, an *encore* to his breakfast ; all of which was attainable for the above small sum. This was the severest lesson upon economy I ever received. But with penuriousness so palpable, I could not help thinking there was a considerable mixture of eccentricity ; for he was known to have accumulated by his labours above a thousand pounds.

"In the evening, I seated myself on a front bench in the pit, to witness the performance. The play was 'The Recruiting Officer' ; and the young and gallant Plume was supported by the manager. When the curtain drew up, he was discovered in his elbow-chair ; one leg, swathed in flannel, resting on a stool. He was dressed in a Queen Anne suit of regimentals, crowned with his

inseparable companion—the wig! which was surmounted by a peculiarly commanding cocked hat, such as may sometimes be seen in the sign-board representation of the Marquess of Granby. His performance of Plume was precisely that of Lord Ogleby; and all the business of the character consisted in his taking snuff, and producing and putting away a dirty pocket-handkerchief. As he could neither exit nor enter, when his scene was over, the curtain was lowered, and he was wheeled off till the next occurred. With the exception of my friend Scott in *Kite*, and Miss Penchard in *Rose*, the rest of the acting preserved a beautiful correspondence to the manager's. The company being as destitute of numbers as talent, Mrs. Penchard doubled *Silvia* and *Captain Brazen*; and Mr. Singer—Mr. Worthy, Costar *Pearman*, and *Justice Balance*, &c.

“Mrs. Penchard, the wife, from a certain slimness of figure and volatility of spirit (though turned sixty), had retained many characters in genteel comedy which were too bustling for her husband to perform, and thus became what was styled the ‘Breeches figure’ of the company. The ‘gallant gay Lothario’ had but lately and reluctantly been given up to her by her husband; and during its

performance one evening, when falling in the combat, part of her dress became discomposed, at which the gallery portion of the audience set up a loud clapping and shouting : this the old lady unfortunately mistook for approbation ; and when her daughter, at the wing, repeatedly requested her to come off, 'I won't—I won't!' she replied, loud enough to be heard by the spectators; 'crack your jealous heart, you don't want any one to get applause but yourself!'

"Some days later we encountered Manager Penchard and his company going out of town. This was a picture!

"First came Mr. Singer and Mrs. Penchard, arm-in-arm; then old Joe, the stage-keeper, leading a Neddy (the property and old companion of Mr. Penchard in his wanderings) which supported two panniers containing the scenery and wardrobe; and above them, with a leg resting on each, Mr. Penchard himself, dressed in his 'Ranger' suit of 'brown and gold,' with his distinguishing wig, and a little three-cornered hat cocked on one side, giving the septuagenarian an air of gaiety that well accorded with his known attachment for the rakes and lovers of the drama: one hand was knuckled in his side (his favourite position), and

the other raised a pinch of snuff to his nose ; and as he passed along he nodded and bowed to all about him, and seemed greatly pleased with the attention he excited. His daughter and two other persons brought up the rear.”*

The same lively pen sketches manager Whitely :—

“On strolling about the town (of Nottingham), I perceived a playbill, and at the head of it the name of that celebrated itinerant, James Whitely, or Jemmy Whitely as he was familiarly called, a son of green Erin, and a worthy associate of those already recorded eccentrics, Thornton, Parker, and Bowles. The name and fame of this person pervaded the three kingdoms, and a hundred recollections of his personal and managerial peculiarities are now thronging my head ; but most of which, as their effect depends upon a certain dramatic illustration, I regret are untransferable to paper. Perhaps this is fortunate, for were the case otherwise, I might write ten volumes of recollections instead of two. I will, however, select a few which are treatable, and the first to exemplify what I have just said.

“Whitely, in the course of his itinerancies, once

* Bernard's 'Retrospects,' vol. i. p. 91.

came to a village where the magistrate was distinguished for two things,—an infirmity of nodding his head, and a genuine Jeremy-Collier distaste to plays and players. Jemmy, nevertheless, determined to wait upon him:—the magistrate was a butter merchant by trade; and Jemmy found him behind the counter, industriously attending to the wants of a dozen customers.

“ ‘Plase, sir,’ said Jemmy, taking off his hat, and bowing very low, ‘my name’s Mr. Whitely the manager, well known in the North of England and Ireland, and all the three kingdoms, for my respectability of karakter.’ The magistrate stared, nodded his head, and said nothing. ‘And I have come to ax your permission (nod again), in passing through the town (nod)—(there are no villages in dramatic geography)—to favour the inhabitants (nod), of whose liberal and enlightened karakter I have often heard (nod, nod), with a few evenings’ entertainments’ (nod, nod, nod).

“The magistrate’s horror at the request had sealed his lips; but Jemmy interpreted the nodding of his head as a tacit consent, and a hint that he wished such consent to be kept secret from those who were about him. ‘Oh, oh!’ he continued, ‘I understand your Worship (nod)—very well, sir (nod)—mum;

thank you, sir (nod, nod),—your Worship and your family will come for nothing (nod, nod); good morning to you, sir; I'm much obliged to you, sir; St. Patrick and the Saints keep you and your butter!' (nod, nod, nod).

"Jemmy then hastened to his myrmidons; a room was engaged, the theatre fitted up, and the play announced. The magistrate in the meantime was informed of their design, and ordered his constables to attend and take the company into custody. His indignation at what appeared to him an open defiance of his authority, suggested this secret and severe mode of proceeding. As the curtain drew up, a pack of 'dogs in office' accordingly leaped on the stage, surrounded their victims, and though they did not 'worry them to death,' they carried them off in their stage clothes and embellishments to the house of the magistrate, leaving the audience (who had paid their money) in as great a quandary as themselves. The magistrate had put on an important wig and demeanour to receive the culprits, and demanded of Whitely, with an accent like that of Mossop in 'Mahomet,' 'Had he dared attempt to contaminate the inn and the village with a profane stage-play without his authority?' Whitely civilly replied, that he had received it.

‘What! do you mean to assert that I gave you permission?’ said the magistrate. ‘No, sir; but I mean to say that you nodded your head when I axed you; and was not that maning that you gave your consent, but didn’t want the Calvinistical bogtrotters who were buying your butter to know anything about it?’

“A long altercation ensued, which terminated in the release of the Thespians, on condition that they instantly quitted the ‘town.’

“Jemmy, whenever he entered a place of importance in which he could pitch his tent, invariably dressed himself in his Don Felix suit (pink silk and white satin, spangled and slashed), with an enormously long feather and rapier, and, accompanied by a boy with a bell, proceeded to the market-place, where he announced his intended performances (this was in 1776). He then waited upon the principal inhabitants respectively to obtain their patronage. On one occasion he entered the house of a retired tradesman, as vulgar as he was wealthy. Jemmy was shown into a room, where, in Oriental magnificence, the owner was reposing upon a couch. No sooner had the former disclosed the object of his visit, than the

lordly adulterator of tea and sugar, eyeing him with an air of aristocratic contempt, exclaimed, 'Oh! you are what they call a strolling player, eh?' Jemmy's back stiffened in an instant from its rainbow inclination to an exact perpendicular, and, laying his hand upon his breast, he replied, 'Sir, whenever I'm blackguarded, I don't condescend to reply;' he then turned away, and walked out of the house.

"Jemmy was not particular, in poor communities, as to whether he received the public support in money or in 'kind.' He would take meat, fowl, vegetables, &c., value them by scales, &c., and pass in the owner and friends for as many admissions as they amounted to. Thus his treasury very often on a Saturday resembled a butcher's warehouse rather than a banker's. At a village on the coast, the inhabitants brought him nothing but fish; but as the company could not subsist without its concomitants of bread, potatoes, and spirits, a general appeal was made to his stomach and sympathies, and some alteration in the terms of admission required. Jemmy accordingly, after admitting nineteen persons one evening for a shad apiece, stopped the twentieth, and said, 'I beg your

pardon, my darling, I am extramely sorry to refuse you; but if we ate any more fish, by the powers, we shall all be turned into mermaids!' "

This strolling life, the lowest stage of all, has a literature of its own; indeed, its professors are the most garrulous of all. These sketches, however, give a fair idea of this strange vagabond existence.

CHAPTER III.

OLD YORK THEATRE.

IN time the diligent stroller might fairly reckon on promotion and look for admission to the country theatre. Actors who became attached to a respectable house of this class were released from their vagabond mode of life, and enjoyed what was only an agreeable change, the passage from one theatre to another on the circuit. Such houses were directed by a solvent personage who had made money, and was held in esteem in the district. Salaries were paid; the actors were comfortable, and often enjoyed the excitement of learning that "a London manager was in the boxes." Even in this class, there were degrees; and theatres like that of York, Hull, or Liverpool, held a comparatively high position and supplied many performers to the London boards. The managers had a peculiar individuality, and a direct and personal influence with their audiences, which was not without a beneficial effect on the drama. But, like the old-

fashioned inn landlord who looked directly after the comfort of the guest, the old country manager has passed away ; there is no place for him under modern theatrical arrangements. At the present time convenient and even elegant theatres have taken the place of the rude old edifices, where though modern scenic appliances and all that sets off acting were deficient, acting itself flourished. This revolution has taken place within the last thirty years, and the country theatre, as may be gathered from Mr. Dickens's vivacious sketches in 'Nicholas Nickleby,' retained until lately the old traditions and practices of the days of Tate Wilkinson. "The bespeak"—the waiting on local patrons at their houses, the rude devices for scenery and properties, of which the "pumps and tubs" were a figure—these were but lingering remnants of the old days in the last century, when Tate Wilkinson commanded at York and Hull, Austen at Chester, and Stephen Kemble in the North. Their necessities and shifts had taught the players wit, or at least liveliness and good-humour ; and nearly all were remarkable for social gifts and oddities which excited a sort of interest and tolerance in the town and country folk who were their supporters. It is evident,

however, that this fellowship must have entailed a certain dependence which was rather humiliating. We hear of the squireen at the inn door calling on the landlord "to turn that actor out of the bar"—of officers in the boxes requiring other unfortunate players to beg pardon "on their knees," with other stories of servitude. And yet, odd as the conclusion may appear, this contempt appears to argue a keener relish in the drama than is found at present, when, in rural districts, the interest has grown too languid even to take offence. Perhaps the most significant proof of the dependency of the poor players' position is conveyed by a truly piteous appeal attached to an old York playbill, in which the manager pleads for the indulgence of his patrons—on whom he is in every way dependent. Nothing more humble could be conceived :—

FOR THE BENEFIT OF MR. ORFEUR,

Who is debarred the liberty of paying his respects and making his interest, on the account of an action in the power of Mr. Huddy, from one at London.

By MR. KEREKAN'S COMPANY OF COMEDIANS, at

MR. BANKS' COCKPIT, without Boulham Bar :

THE MOURNING BRIDE.

NEW THEATRE, IN MY LORD IRWIN'S YARD, YORK.

On Tuesday will be acted a Play called

HENRY THE IVTH,

WITH

THE HUMOURS OF SIR JOHN FALSTAFF,

In which Mr. Keregan hopes the Gentlemen and Ladies of this City will favor him with their company, it being the only night he desires before subscription time, notwithstanding his great charges for their reception.

BOXES, Three Shillings. PIT, Two Shillings. STAGE,
Three Shillings. MIDDLE GALLERY, One Shilling.

N.B.—The Play will be all new dressed with new Scenes from London, suitable to his House; with a Prologue and Epilogue. The Musick consists of Overtures, Concertos, Sonatos, and Solos. Three Pieces will be performed before the Play begins: the first at five o'clock, the second at half-an-hour after five, and the third at six; at the end of which the Curtain will be drawn up.

THE CASE OF THOMAS KEREGAN,

*Proprietor of the Theatre, humbly addressed to the Quality, Gentry,
and Citizens of York.*

Having suffered very much of late in my business, and as I apprehend by an ill opinion conceived of me for keeping up my subscription tickets at the price they were first given out on the erection of my new Theatre, it having been suggested that they might be afforded at a lower price, but an unreasonable desire had made me reject the advice of my

friends in that respect, I thought it my duty as well as interest to give the inhabitants of this ancient city the best satisfaction I was able in this affair, by voluntarily laying before them the state of my last quarter's accounts, whereby it will appear that I was near one hundred pounds a loser by the last quarter's subscriptions only. And as I never did desire anything more than a reasonable maintenance for myself and family, I humbly hope, after the great expense I have been at, that I shall not be compelled to remove my company to some other place for the want of encouragement here. . . . I beg leave further to inform the public that, notwithstanding I have lowered the pit tickets to sixteen shillings, the advantage I have received by it hath been very small—viz., only the addition of fourteen subscribers, notwithstanding that it reduces the pit to sevenpence-halfpenny a night, which is less than half the price paid to the meanest company of players in the kingdom. Before I conclude this short representation of my case, I cannot but take notice that it hath been insinuated very much to my prejudice, *that neither myself nor my wife have been sufficiently thankful for favors which have been done us in coming to our benefits*, whereas I can say with great truth that no one was ever more sensible of (and thankful for) such favors than we both have always been, however we may have failed in any acknowledgments from the stage, a thing never practised in any theatre but this, it being contrary to the rules of the stage. But as we are now sensible it is expected from us, we shall take care for the future, to the best of our knowledge, to do nothing which may give offence to any of our friends and benefactors.

During quarter, with box and pit takes £288 13 3

To 16 actors and actresses at 12s. and a pit ticket per week	£145	12	0
„ Mrs. Evar and Mrs. Copen's children	1	10	0
For the use of clothes, scenes, &c., from shares on salaries allowed by the meanest companies abroad	72	16	0
To charges of new people coming from London ..	10	10	0
„ 31 nights' charges, &c.	124	0	0
„ getting up 2 Entertainments	30	0	0
Sum total of expenses	£384	8	0
„ receipts	288	13	3
Lost last quarter	£95	14	9

The persons who take my money have set their hands to this account, and, if necessary, are ready to make oath of the same.—W. GREEN, J. EMMETT.

For a more particular satisfaction, the following account of the nightly charges of acting :—

Bills one day with another ; incidents one night

with another; drink to doorkeepers	£2 14 0
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Besides play-books, writing of plays out, and odd parts ; for writing out music ; drink for the music at practice ; letters for several players, carpenters, and smiths ; jobs often for particular plays ; glasses frequently broke ; washing the stock ; cards ; wax.

Poor Mr. Keregan! His "case" speaks a world of obsequious dependence and contemptuous patronage; and his apology for apparent ingratitude and the omission of the serf-like custom of "acknowledgments from the stage" is truly pathetic.

It was scarcely surprising that the player who retained some respect for himself should have shrunk from this act of homage. "After the play," says the old York manager Wilkinson, "the performer was to return thanks, and if married, both husband and wife to appear. Mr. Frodsham once, at York, spoke a comic epilogue, and actually carried his wife (now living) on and off the stage *on his back* to comply with the expected homage. On particular occasions, four or five children to make up weight, curtseying and bowing in frocks, had a wonderful effect; as the audience in general, and the ladies in particular, prided themselves on bestowing their bounty on such a painstaking man, or such a painstaking couple, as they proved themselves to be." At Norwich a drum and trumpet went round the town with the bill-distributor, who, after each flourish and roll, gave out the piece of the night. There were some who naturally thought these customs to be badges of servitude, and the manager of the York Theatre wished to abolish them, with what result his own quaint language shall tell:—

"I must describe," he says, "one severe edict in force when I assumed the regency reins: I mean the custom of the man and his wife returning thanks on

the stage—and what was truly dreadful, the draggle-tailed Andromache, in frost, rain, hail, and snow, delivering her benefit playbills from door to door, ‘where piercing winds blew sharp, and the chill rain dropped from some penthouse on her wretched head.’ But use had in some measure rendered it familiar—and no wonder if Hector’s widow, when suppliant and in tears, was induced, on such solicitations, to accept with thanks a cheering drop. When I mentioned that degrading and painful custom to the company at York, previous to my being manager, they seemed to lament the woes they sustained as the laborious custom of their workhouse duty. And the reader (particularly if theatrical) will start with astonishment when I aver on my word, that when I put the law in force to entirely and decidedly relieve those ladies and gentlemen from the complained-of evident hardship, it was received by the then York company of 1766 with marks of disgust, and a conspired combination against me, their chief, in consequence ensued—such is the force of habit, and the use of complying with despicable meanness rather than run the hazard of losing a trifle. So how could I make those free that were by nature slaves? Their pleas were, that the *quality would*

not come (a phrase constantly used in country towns by the lower people); that the town inhabitants would be *much enraged*, and that Mr. Wilkinson was not subjected to such supercilious duty: besides it was apparently to the advantage of the theatre; and as the manager shared the receipts on benefit nights, he had no cause to complain or be dissatisfied; he reaped the advantages, and the performers only had the difficulties to encounter. Those arguments I treated as futile, weak, absurd, and not to the purpose.

“Good God! what a sight! to actually behold Mr. Frodsham, bred as a gentleman, with fine natural talents, and esteemed in York as a Garrick, the Hamlet of the age, running after or stopping a gentleman on horseback to deliver his benefit bill, and beg half-a-crown (then the price of the boxes). During Mr. Baker’s life I never had authority sufficient to prevent the performers from constantly attending the assembly-rooms and presenting their petitions; but when I was exalted from regent to the being sole monarch, for the credit of York city and myself, I was *then* obeyed; though in all states there will be now and then refractory black-hearted rebels start up, whose souls are truly malignant and not to be con-

trolled, but in the end such people make themselves so hated and despised, that in consequence of their bad tongues, and their own actions giving the lie to their fawning and dissembled goodness, their services are shunned everywhere, and they fall into the net they designed for others."

The York Theatre was perhaps the best specimen of the country theatre; for the Bath Theatre held an exceptional position. This pre-eminence it owed to the tact, character, and exertions of its manager, Tate Wilkinson, who was known to several generations of the profession. Later he shall be introduced to relate his own adventures; but our view of the York Theatre—or indeed of the typical country theatre—would be incomplete without presenting this well-known figure.

Having made some money during a laborious life, he determined to invest it in this theatre, where he had often acted, but which the easy-going management of "old Baker" had reduced to decay. He was tired of wandering.

He invested his savings—nearly two thousand pounds—in the concern, and in the year 1766 entered on the management. For more than thirty years he conducted it with great success, and it may be added, singularity. He had tact

enough to discern the promise of many obscure players, whom he encouraged with good salaries, and retained in his service until the "London manager"—that rock ahead of the thriving country theatre—beguiled them to town. It was thus that he developed the talents of Kemble, Siddons, Fawcett, Jordan, Inchbald, and many more. It was to his credit that after the great actress's first failure in London he should have received her warmly and given her the leading place. He was not, however, to be known simply as an enterprising manager. From being a student of eccentricity, he became himself the most eccentric of beings; and as he was in an irresponsible position, his oddities were encouraged to develop themselves. The name of the York house became known over the kingdom, and the stories of his peculiarities were the entertainment of every green-room.

The York Theatre helps us to a picture of the country-town society as it was in the last century. When the wealthy families came up for the York seasons, during race and assize weeks, the town filled to overflowing. The sheriff, and the stewards, and the officers, all patronised the theatre; and during those festivals the actors received double salaries.

One of the characteristics of the country theatre used to be the reasonable pride of the audience in their own performers. Those who had lived among them for many years were known and respected, and reflected a certain credit on the place. It is indeed recorded, that when the reports of Garrick's extraordinary success reached Liverpool, the patrons of the drama there began to be exercised as to the question whether the new actor could be superior to their own two leading performers, Messrs. Gibson and Ridout, who enjoyed the highest reputation. This discussion became so exciting that at last a deputation going up to town on corporate business were charged specially to visit the theatre and bring back an accurate report. On their return the question was eagerly put, and, to the relief of the public, it was gravely announced "that Gibson and Ridout were on the whole superior." It was scarcely wonderful that, being thus appreciated, the local actor should hold his head high; and the York company could always show a "line of veterans" who had played from youth to old age, and who, confident in their superiority and in the admiration of the town, affected to disdain all metropolitan allurements. Conspicuous among these was Mr. Frodsham, "the

York Roscius" in "old Baker's" time, and Mr. Cummins, the ancient tragedian of Wilkinson's,—both delightful characters. The sketch of Frodsham drawn by Wilkinson is admirable, and for gaiety and humour might be a scene out of a good old comedy :—

"I apprehend that many persons in Yorkshire, whether the old who have seen Mr. Frodsham, or the young who have heard much of that gentleman, will be pleased with a description of him : I have therefore in this niche placed him ; and shall here give (according to my best recollection) a concise sketch of the once much-talked-of, and the now almost forgotten Frodsham, who was thirty years ago termed the York Garrick.

"The abilities of that performer were unquestionable. Mr. Frodsham had a quick genius, aided by a liberal education : but his mind, his understanding, and superabundant good qualities, were all warped and undermined by nocturnal habits ; which failings unfortunately were supplied by refreshing pulls at the brandy-bottle in the morning, to take off all qualms from the stomach, till the certain consequence ensued of being enfeebled, disordered, mad, dropsical, and dead at the age of thirty-five.

“Mr. Powell of London, whom the stage had cause to lament, is the nearest assimilation I can give of Frodsham. Mr. Powell had the opportunity of strictly observing real artists, Garrick and Barry, in all their modes and shapes of grief : inattentive Frodsham unhappily was his own master, and a careless one ; for though he set himself difficult tasks, he only now and then pursued the trump of fame with ardency or alacrity, but lagged, and never reached the goal, though a very little spurring and jockeyship would have made him come in first, and won many a theatrical plate. The public were so infatuated (and indeed he was so superior) that he cast all others at a distance in his York situation ; and the audience too blindly and too partially (for his good) approved all he did beyond comparison ; and when in full pride, before he wilfully sunk himself, I do not think any actor but Garrick would have been liked so well ; and even Garrick, not without some old maids’ opinions at a secret cabal, where Frodsham would have been voted superior, and under the rose appointed the man for the ladies. Nor would that decision in favour of Frodsham have been from elderly ladies only, as he had often melted the youthful fair ones of the tenderest moulds, whose hearts have been

susceptible whenever Frodsham was the lover. Thus situated at 1*l.* 1*s.* per week salary, Frodsham had not any opportunity for observation or improvement : no infringement was suffered, or change of characters. About thirty-two years ago he obtained a fortnight for holidays, which occasioned great lamentations at York, for they were certain if Mr. Garrick saw Frodsham it would be a woful day for the York stage. He not only was young and vain, but self-opinionated to a superabundant degree. When in London he left a card at Mr. Garrick's house, 'Mr. Frodsham of York,' with the same ease and facility as if it had been the first gentleman from Yorkshire. Mr. Garrick judged this card of a *country stroller* very easy and very extraordinary, and from the sample wished to see the York actor, who had accordingly admittance the ensuing day ; and after a slight conversation, during which Garrick was astonished at the young man's being so very free and affable, particularly on any subject pertaining to Shakespeare's plays, &c., and still with a procrastination that Garrick was not accustomed to, or by any means relished a compliance with, he delayed, every minute expecting that Frodsham would present his petition to be heard, and receive his

commendation from Garrick's eye of favour. But this obsequious request not being made, Garrick urged present business, and presented the York Romeo with an order for the pit, desiring him that night to favour him with attendance to see him perform Sir John Brute, accompanied with an invitation to breakfast the ensuing morning—at the same time asking him, 'Pray now, have you seen a play since your arrival in London?'—'Oh yes,' quickly answered Mr. Frodsham, 'I saw you play Hamlet two nights ago;' to which he added it was his own favourite character. 'Well,' says Garrick, 'pray now, how did you approve, Frodsham? I hope I pleased you:' for that night he had judged his performance a lucky hit. Frodsham replied, 'Oh yes, certainly, my dear sir, vastly clever in several passages; but I cannot so far subjoin mine to the public opinion of London, as to say I was equally struck with your whole performance in that part.' I do not conjecture that any actor who spoke to Garrick ever so amazed him. Garrick stammered and said, 'Why—why now, to be sure now, why I suppose you in the country—Pray now, Mr. Frodsham, what sort of a place do you act in at York? Is it in a room, or riding-house, occasionally fitted up?'

‘Oh no, sir, a theatre, upon my honour.’—‘Oh sure, why my Lord Burlington has said that; why, will—will you breakfast to-morrow, and we will have a trial of skill, and Mrs. Garrick shall judge between us,—ha, ha, ha, now, I say. Good day, Mr. York, for I must be at the theatre, so now pray remember breakfast.’ Frodsham promised he would, and made his exit. And though Garrick himself told me the circumstance, and truly laughed then, yet I am certain at the time he had been greatly piqued, astonished, and surprised at so strange a visit from a country actor; yet wishing to satisfy his curiosity, had done it for once at the expense of his pride and dignity. The following day arrived the York hero at *Palais Royale* in Southampton Street, according to appointment—breakfast finished, with Madam Garrick as good superintendent, waiting with impatience, and full of various conjectures why the *poor* man from the country did not take courage and prostrate before the foot of majesty, humbly requesting a trial, engagement, &c.; but as Frodsham did not, as expected, break the ice, Garrick did. ‘Well, Mr. Frodsham, why now, well, that is, I suppose you saw my Brute last night? Now, no compliment, but tell Mrs. Garrick; well now, was it right?

Do you think it would have pleased at York? Now speak what you think!—‘Oh!’ says Frodsham, ‘certainly, certainly; and, upon my honour, without compliment, I never was so highly delighted and entertained—it was beyond my comprehension: but having seen you play Hamlet first, your Sir John Brute exceeded my belief; for I have been told, Hamlet, Mr. Garrick, is one of your first characters; but I must say, I flatter myself I play it almost as well; for comedy, my good sir, is your forte. But your Brute, d—n it, Mr. Garrick, your Brute was excellence itself! You stood on the stage in the drunken scene flourishing your sword; you placed yourself in an attitude—I am sure you saw me in the pit at the same time, and with your eyes you seemed to say, “D—n it, Frodsham, did you ever see anything like that at York? Could you do that, Frodsham?”’ (and it is possible the last remark was a just one). The latter part of this harangue of Frodsham’s possibly went not so glibly down as the tea at breakfast; and the ease and familiarity with which it was accompanied and delivered, not only surprised, but mortified Garrick, who expected adulation and the bended knee.

“After much affectation of laughter, and seem-

ingly approving all Frodsham had uttered—‘Well now, hey! for a taste of your quality—now a speech, Mr. Frodsham, from Hamlet; and, Mrs. Garrick, “bear a wary eye.”’ Frodsham, with the utmost composure, spoke Hamlet’s first soliloquy without any idea of fear or terror, or indeed allowing Garrick, as a tragedian, a better Hamlet, or superior to himself; Garrick all the while darting his fiery eyes into the soul of Frodsham—a custom of Garrick’s to all whom he deemed subservient, as if he meant to alarm and convey from those eyes an idea of intelligence to the beholder of his own amazing intellect. Garrick certainly possessed most extraordinary powers of eye, as they contained not only the fire and austerity he meant to convey, but his simplicity in Scrub, and archness of eye in Don John, were equally excellent and as various. On Frodsham the eye of terror had no such effect; for if he had noticed and thought Mr. Garrick’s eyes were penetrating, he would inwardly have comforted himself his own were equally brilliant, if not superiorly so. When Frodsham had finished Hamlet’s first speech, and without stop, *To be or not to be*, &c., Garrick said, ‘Well, hey now! hey! you have a smattering, but you want a little of my forming; and really

in some passages you have acquired tones I do not by any means approve.' Frodsham tartly replied, 'Tones, Mr. Garrick! to be sure I have tones, but you are not familiarised to them. I have seen you act twice, Hamlet the first, and I thought you had odd tones, and Mrs. Cibber strange tones, and they were not quite agreeable to me on the first hearing, but I dare say I should soon be reconciled to them.'—'Why now,' says the much-astonished, wondering Garrick, 'nay now, this is—why now really, Frodsham, you are a d—d queer fellow; but for a fair and full trial of your genius my stage shall be open, and you shall act any part you please, and if you succeed we will then talk of terms.'—'Oh!' says Frodsham, in the same flighty flow of spirits, 'you are mistaken, my dear Mr. Garrick, if you think I came here to solicit an engagement; I am a Roscius at my own quarters! I came to London purposely to see a few plays, and looking on myself as a man not destitute of talents, I judged it a proper compliment to wait on a brother genius. I thought it indispensable to see you and have half an hour's conversation with you—I neither want nor wish for an engagement; for I would not abandon or relinquish the happiness I enjoy in Yorkshire for the first terms your great and grand city of

London could afford ;' and with a negligent, wild bow made his exit, and left the gazing Garrick following his shade, like Shakespeare's ghost, himself standing in an attitude of surprise, to ruminate and reflect, and to relate this account of the strangest mad actor he had ever seen, or ever after did see."

Once, when Colman came to York to make some engagements, a dinner was given in his honour by the manager. The play for the evening was 'The School for Scandal,' and he asked with some curiosity who was to play Charles Surface. A respectable old gentleman of sixty was sitting opposite, who had been eating in silence, and to whom the manager pointed, saying, "Mr. Cummins is the *Charles*." The actor bowed complacently, and Colman could not restrain a grimace. This was the established glory of the York stage, who had ranted and mouthed for thirty or forty years, and whose position was secure. When Kemble, laboriously studying his profession, was attempting to make some impression on the Yorkshire "Tykes," it was pronounced that he was very good in his way, "but nothin' to Coomins!" A grave criticism from a local paper has been preserved in which good-natured words of warning

and encouragement are given to the young aspirant, and he is told, if he would really wish to rise, to bestow pains on studying the various points of Mr. Cummins' style. Excellent as Kemble's promise was, the customs of the York stage were inflexible, and he was never allowed to interfere with Mr. Cummins, who to the last retained all his characters. This veteran was to be one of the few players who have died literally in harness, and drawn their last breath at the foot-lights.

All about the establishment had a dash of the director's eccentricity. The wardrobe-keeper, "Johnny Winter," who, though in care of a rich stock of dresses, had an almost invincible objection to allowing them to be used, was a character. All manner of spectacle was his particular dread and detestation, and Shakespeare's plays were classed and confounded by him with pieces requiring show, dress, and numbers. Above all, he hated to look out dresses for the supernumeraries, whom he called *superneedlesses*. He argued against and resisted their aid, in the most senseless, selfish manner he was master of; and when the night came, he would abuse the people and obstruct their preparations. Whenever the manager ordered the revival of any of Shake-

sppeare's plays, his abhorrence of them was proportioned to their processions, and he was almost frantic during John Kemble's engagement, when the play of 'Coriolanus' was revived. "*That* John Kemble and Shakespeare," Mr. Mathews heard him say, "have given me more trooble than all the other people in t' world put together, and my spouse into t' bargain." He especially hated 'Henry the Eighth,' and others of the historical plays that required numbers to be dressed.

Here as in other towns the players—or the manager, rather—were dependent on the caprices of their patrons—the squires, the small gentry of the town, and the officers. Mr. Wilkinson, however, had a certain independence, and by asserting that of his profession, succeeded in raising its dignity. The tyranny of these patrons was indeed insupportable. One night when Mr. Kemble was playing, a lady of position in the neighbourhood disturbed the performance by loud remarks and ridicule of the actor. As this treatment was continued, Mr. Kemble, after many pauses and significant glances, at last came forward, and addressing the offender declared that he could not go on until the disturbance ceased. The lady was attended by some officers of the garrison, who resented what they

considered "the insult," and uproariously insisted on his coming forward to apologize. The spirited actor refused. The performance was not allowed to go on. He came forward, and replied to the cries of submission with a decided "Never." On this the "influential" party left the box. On the next day the military gentlemen took the matter up, insisting on the dismissal of the offender, and attempting to intimidate the manager by declaring that unless the wish was complied with, all further patronage should be withdrawn, and that they and their friends, with even the tradesmen they employed, should never enter the theatre. This was a serious crisis, but the veteran manager took a spirited part. He had always found Kemble "a gentleman," and respected him. He refused to dismiss him, saying that he was in the right, and that he valued him more than all the patronage of the family and its dependants. After many further attempts at bullying him into compliance his firmness prevailed, and the audience came round to his side.

Before he could thus vindicate his position the York manager had to undergo other humiliations :—

"This leads me to an anecdote, which suddenly and impulsively bursts on my recollection. A first

esteemed gentleman in the spacious county of York, whose polished understanding and manners were universally acknowledged and admired, even to the extent of popularity in the great world, some few years since desired to patronise a play. I sent my treasurer with the catalogue (as is usual on such occasions to any leading person); but on looking over the list of tragedies, comedies, and farces, he declared he could not determine, and desired Mr. Wilkinson would attend him and his party after dinner, at the inn where he then for a few days resided. Which mandate I obeyed; and without being arrogant, in my idea (as his Majesty's patentee), undoubtedly expected being favoured with sitting at the cheerful board, and holding some chit-chat relative to the play and farce that he intended to sanction. Instead of such usual and indeed common civility, after waiting a considerable time in the bar, I was at length ushered into the room where the company had dined, when Sir — — beckoned me to approach him at the upper end of the table, where I impertinently expected to have sat down; but neither found a vacancy, or the waiter even ordered to produce me a chair. Sir — — discoursed relative to the play—then of York city;

graciously observed I had acted Bayes so as to merit his approbation; and to heighten the compliment remarked, he was no judge, as he seldom visited the theatre, either in London or elsewhere. At length he condescendingly asked me to drink a glass of wine, which I begged to decline; but he requested a worthy and respectable gentleman (now living) to give a glass, which he handed to me as if I had been a common porter waiting for a message: for I actually stood all the while at the backs of their chairs. I was most truly happy to depart, and from that day lost all anxiety or ray of inclination to pay my devoirs or wait on that great man, who was then termed the Grandison of the age.

“I would attribute this to want of thought at the time; but I do not see how that could be the case for so long a space, where sense and good breeding were by all allowed to be the characteristic qualities of that gentleman.”

Here is his picture of a York race week and its trials:—

“The York races (which in the year 1765 were in their great glory) made me imagine ‘Love à la Mode’ would prove of the highest consequence there; and I said to myself, I,

I should do great things at the theatre from ‘*Love à la Mode*,’ which would go down pleasantly, and expected to be applauded as a Garrick, a Foote, and a Macklin, in the different characters: and here, good reader, you will observe a lesson for vanity, and as efficacious and as good a cure as are Spilsbury’s drops for the scurvy, or Godbold’s for a consumption.

“The Monday in the race week I fixed on Cadwallader in the farce, as a part I was certain the York audience were partial to me in, and judged I was established in their opinions. When at rehearsal that noon a message was sent to me, while on the stage, that several gentlemen desired to speak with me in Mr. Baker’s dining-room. I instantly obeyed the summons (first desiring the performers to wait), and in imagination assuring myself it must certainly be a complimentary intended bespoke play, for my performing in some shining character the night following. When I made my entrance into the room, in high mirth and glee, where the gentlemen were, and was singing aloud,

York races are just now beginning,
The lads and their lasses are coming,

after my bow, and on the survey of features, not

recollecting one individual face there assembled, I naturally requested to be acquainted with the honour of their commands, as I was at that time busily engaged with my attention to the rehearsal of 'The Author,' a farce of Mr. Foote's, which was intended for that very evening; when a young gentleman quickly replied, 'Sir, it is that very rehearsal and farce I came to put an immediate stop to;' then turning to Mr. Baker, said: 'Sir, you need not be informed the York Theatre is not licensed, and if you are not acquainted with another circumstance, I beg you will understand you are guilty of a double offence, by a flagrant breach of law and flying in the face of authority; as the impudent libel called 'The Author,' written by that scoundrel Foote, was stopped from any future performance six years ago, in December, 1758, and has not been permitted since. My name, Mr. Wilkinson, is Apreece, and the character of Cadwallader you mean to perform is an affront to the memory of my father (who is now dead): as his son, by G-d, I will not suffer such insolence to pass either unnoticed or unpunished; therefore if at night you dare attempt or presume to play that farce, myself and friends are determined, one and all, not to leave a bench or scene

in your theatre; so, Mr. Wilkinson, your immediate and determinate answer.' I could only refer to Mr. Baker, who was the manager and the proprietor; I was only on an engagement with that gentleman for the race week, and I should be guided by his opinion and direction. 'Well, Mr. Baker,' said Mr. Apreece, 'we wait your decision.' The old gentleman spoke thus: 'Why, look ye, d'ye see, gentlemen, if so be that is the case, why as to the matter of that, Mr. Wilkinson, d'ye see me, must not act Cadwallader this evening.' That, Mr. Apreece said, was all he requested, and added, that himself and friends would all attend the theatre that night, but expected no infringement to be made on the treaty, either by secret or offensive means, to cause an opposition after the manager's word was given; then wished a good race week, and Apreece and his numerous association departed.

"For some minutes Mr. Baker and I stood and gazed at each other like Gayless and Sharp after Kitty Pry's departure: where one says, 'O Sharp! Sharp!' the other answers, 'O master! master!' But when recovered a little from the dilemma, what was to be done? that was the question! To be or not to be?—for I could not

advance forward ('The Author' being a favourite farce) and say, 'A party of gentlemen would not suffer it to be acted, for if it was they threatened a dangerous riot.' Nor could we give out handbills and inform the public a performer was dangerously ill, who might immediately contradict it and assert his being in perfect health: so in council it was agreed to be naturally stupid, say nothing, but substitute 'The Mayor of Garratt,' and proceed with the farce, so changed, without any apology whatever. It certainly was the strangest mode that ever was adopted, or that ever was suffered without momentous consequences, attended with strict inquiry and investigation.

"The first scene between Sir Jacob Jollup and Mr. Lint the apothecary, the *astonished* audience sat, each staring in his fellow's face, like Shakespeare's blacksmith with his hammer up and swallowing a tailor's news, and concluded it was something new by Wilkinson foisted into 'The Author,' but when I was announced as the Major, and made my entrance, the reader will not be surprised when informed I was received with an universal hiss. I took no notice, but went on. The disapprobation continued, but not so virulently as to occasion a standstill; and the reader

may be assured we lost no time in getting our work over, but wished for bed-time, and that all were well; for though I owed Heaven a debt, it is clearly evident it was not then due, and I was, like Falstaff, loth to pay before the day. At last the death of that day's life came on, the curtain dropped, and the poor Major Sturgeon sneaked away with marks of anger following at his heels, and slunk to bed to cover himself and his dishonour. So ended the first lesson of the week, where I expected to have outdone my usual doings; but the greatest generals have met with disgraces and misfortunes.

"Tuesday I acted 'The Lyar,' which went off wonderfully well; I breathed better than in the morning, and felt once more a little elated. I had fixed on 'The Apprentice' as the entertainment, which the summer before had done much for me in London; but unfortunately it happened to be a favourite part of Mr. Frodsham's (who in truth did not play it well, but quite the contrary), and in that character I failed again, without a single hand to assist. I laboured through a part in which, in London, I had been much flattered by applause in the extreme; my imitations were not known in Yorkshire, therefore naturally passed

without the least effect. The reader will smile at the pleasant week I had promised myself, but I fed on thin diet, that of hope, which I doubted not would give a brilliant and good ending after the bad beginning.

“About twelve on the Wednesday, when I had finished the rehearsal of ‘The Provoked Wife,’ a deputation of gentlemen were sent as ambassadors from the ladies assembled then at Giordani’s concert. The gentlemen who came from the rooms informed me and Mr. Baker, that Lady Bingley and all the ladies assembled sent their compliments; they wished that night to make a point of visiting the theatre before they went to the rooms, in order to show every encouragement to the manager; but it was with the proviso that so indecent a play as ‘The Provoked Wife’ (which the ladies could not by any means countenance) might be changed to another comedy, if their protection and patronage were worth consideration; but if their request was not complied with, they should not on any account enter the theatre, as they would not by any means think of sitting out so improper a representation. The ladies added, that as to the farce of ‘The Upholsterer’ being altered, it was very immaterial, as

very few would continue after the play, but go to the rooms. More comfort still for unfortunate Wilkinson!

“Well, the command, as it might be termed, from the boxes, was likely and necessary to be obeyed, however mortifying it was to me; fresh bills were issued forth with every necessary information of the play being altered, at the universal desire of persons of distinction, to ‘Love in a Village.’ At that time York races were remarkable for attracting the first families, not only of that immense county, but the kingdom at large; and York was then honoured with as many ladies of the first distinction as gentlemen. But oh, what a falling off is there! Oh, woe is me to have seen what I have seen, and seeing what I see! The house was full, and the boxes were much crowded; and my only care for the evening was to prepare for the Barber, though most of the ladies and gentlemen would not wait to be SHAVED; but to those who did I was not much indebted for the compliment of their attendance, as too sure I had Pilgarlick’s ill luck again; for as to my resemblance of Woodward it did not occur to one in a hundred, but it struck the fancy of the million that it was a part that appertained to their favourite

Robertson, their darling (and deservedly so, for he was a comedian of true merit). But in regard to my playing the Barber, my dressing like Woodward, I was afterwards informed, was in every article of it contrary to the dress of Mr. Robertson; and as they pinned their faith upon his sleeve, why he was right, and I was judged wrong in every particular; therefore absurd and assuming in Wilkinson to attempt Mr. Robertson's part of the Barber; he would spoil it, and was impudent, ignorant, and deserved chastisement; and I quitted the stage the third night with an universal hiss and general marks of disapprobation. It was to me a week of perplexity and woe—not pleasure, to so great a man as *I* had fancied myself.

“The next day I accidentally stepped into a milliner's shop, where a little elderly lady sat knitting in the corner, and without once looking at me on my entrance (or if she had she would *not* have known me) said, ‘Well, I am sure, Nanny, you never shall persuade me to go to the play again to see that hunch-backed Barber. Give me ‘The Mourning Bride,’ and Mr. Frodsham, and then there is some sense in it; but for that man, that Wilkinson, as you call him, from London, pray

let him go back and stay there, for he is the ugliest man I ever saw in my life, and so thought Nanny. I am sure if he was worth his weight in gold he should never marry a daughter of mine.' I turned round to her, and said, 'Dear Madam, do not be so very hard-hearted—try the theatre once more when *I play*, and I will exert my best abilities to make you amends and deserve your better sentiments.' The old lady stared, down dropped the spectacles, the knitted garters followed (which had busily employed her attention while speaking); and without a single word she took to her heels (which were nimble), and ran away out of the back-door into New Street.

"Not having finished the career of that memorable race week, I must here register that Fortune had not ceased plaguing me with my performance of the Barber; for on the night following Mrs. Centlivre's play of the 'Busy-Body' was acted—Marplot, Mr. Frodsham; to which was added my highly-valued tower of strength, my 'Ville de Paris,' called 'Love à la Mode.' Thundering applause and shouts of expectation had pleasingly disturbed my sleep the night before, with glorious vast ideas, such as expecting thanks, and being the topic of admiring conversation, for the *favour*

Mr. Wilkinson had conferred on the town by so good and unexpected a feast as Mr. Macklin's 'Love à la Mode.' Indeed, one material point was gained, for the theatre was crowded in every part. The York audience then were particularly lukewarm as to applause, when compared to any other established theatre. But that serenity is now altered as if the children of another soil—and that sometimes even to the overdoing. More than three plaudits, however their admiration may be raised, in my humble opinion destroys their own dignity, and three is full sufficient for any performer's greediness; beyond, enfeebles instead of strengthening the intended effect.

"But to return to 'Love à la Mode,' in which the first scene being merely introductory, not any applause could have been extorted from any audience; silence and attention was all that could be required, and that was granted. The scene of the Jew (Beau Mordecai) followed next:—not a smile; as I stood behind the scenes on the very tenter-hooks of expectation my vanity attributed that only to the want of a little rousing and my desired appearance. A rat-a-tat at the stage-door, and now for it! says I. When I entered as Sir Archy, scarcely a hand! My heart sank

somewhere—no matter where. I said to myself, for comfort, Assume courage! I tried and tried, but all in vain; the scene dragged and grew more and more dull. Next came Sir Callaghan, whom I was truly glad to see, as it relieved me from a heavy tedious courtship with the lady which did not promise much better success—any change, I trusted would be for the better. They gave applause on seeing Frodsham, and a few simpering smiles gave me a cheerer, and I judged all would be for the better. But when I as Sir Archy and he as Sir Callaghan were left to ourselves in the quarrelling scene, which is truly well executed by the author, and very entertaining, instead of peals of laughter, which I had assured myself would follow, and to my speeches in particular, the full assemblage before us seemed as if by magnetism charmed into an evening nap—all was hush—they appeared perfectly willing to grant leave for our departure. We ended the act, but not with any honours to grace the remembrance—and indeed by the turn of faces in the boxes, and almost in every other part, it was very perceptible the actors, or the piece, were by no means approved. I, for my own part, as an actor, never felt so severe a disappointment, and wished

for the week over, as I could then take my leave of York for ever.

“While the music was playing preparatory to the second act, Frodsham flew eagerly to get relief from his fatal and false friend, the brandy-bottle. I was not quite so rash, but was contented with sending for a bottle of Madeira, of which I took large and eager libations. Thus armed (after a tedious music) by the inspiration of the invincible spirit of wine, I felt bold, and sallied forth once more to take the field. I had to Frodsham confessed myself disappointed and hurt; however, submissive resignation to the decrees of the Fates was indispensable; and as an honest witness on a trial often gives weight to the jury, so did I rest hopes on my Squire Groom’s setting all matters right; and I predicted, that when the curtain dropped I should be envious of his receiving all the honours and praises that would, from the part being so applicable to the week, insure good fortune. When Squire Groom made his *entrée* in his new dress and *aw* his pontificalibus, exactly as Mr. King had accoutred himself at London when he acted that part, why even there my hopes were frustrated; for his being dressed as a gentleman who had been

riding his own match, gave offence instead of being pleasing to the gentlemen of the turf; it was sneered at as impertinently taking too great a liberty in the race week to have any freedom of character, or even to be permitted to pass, at a time when the whole dependence of the theatre rested on the resort of company that attended York races. Squire Groom's scene was permitted to get through with difficulty—at the end of which, apparent disgust and weariness lessened the audience every minute; and then vanished all my pleasing prospect of profit and applause from my fancied treasure in possessing the celebrated farce of 'Love à la Mode'; and as the people from all parts hastily retired, we were equally quick in bringing about the catastrophe, and were not under much terror or apprehension for the conclusion, as none were left except a few harmless gazers, that neither cared for the audience, the farce, nor the actors, but found themselves in the theatre they scarce knew how, and as peaceably departed they hardly knew why."

He had other powers to conciliate, as will be seen from the account of his giving offence to the officers of the militia then quartered in the town:—

"I ever worked like a horse at a mill to deserve

my engagement, whether in town or country. My benefit was appointed, at my desire, on Monday, October 3. That day, I beg the reader will notice, was the first day of the militia's assembling. My bill of that night was nearly as follows:—‘*The last night*.—“The Rehearsal”: Bayes, Mr. Wilkinson. End of the play, by *particular desire*, the principal scene from the new farce called “The Mayor of Garratt”; the character of Major Sturgeon (of the Westminster militia) by Mr. Wilkinson: also a scene from “The Orators”; Peter Paragraph by Mr. Wilkinson: with the farce of “The Citizen”; Young Philpot, Mr. Wilkinson.’ Surely I gave them enough for their money, whatever it might want in quality. The house was crowded in every part, particularly the stage, by gentlemen, for want of room in the front of the house. The officers of the new militia were all there, and at their head the ever-entertaining Chace Price, whom I rejoiced to see; he had sent me a compliment at noon (being my benefit), and was between the acts in great spirits, chatting with me and others. At the end of the comedy of ‘The Rehearsal’ he desired to wish Mr. Bayes good night, as he found himself much fatigued with his journey, and expected a severe bout the next

day with the bottle at the mess where he was president; he said he would get a good night's rest, having travelled from London to Shrewsbury without going to bed. On his departure I retired to dress for the new part of Major Sturgeon (the reader will observe that farce was not then in print). On my appearance behind the scenes as the Major, I thought the countenances of several of the officers did not augur a pleasing aspect to my intended performance; but, not supposing any violent anger could possibly arise without a sufficient cause, hoped I should be made ample amends by the smiling faces and laughing cheeks in front of the theatre. But the new commanders not having been at that juncture in London, when Mr. Foote's 'Mayor of Garratt' was acting, they knew nothing of its fashionable *ton* there, or if they did, would not allow that as a sufficient plea for them, as men of valour, why they should not resent an injurious affront, from what they looked on as an unjustifiable and intentional insult; they therefore one and all pressed so hard and close together at the first wing, where I was to make my entrance, as to prevent the possibility of gaining admittance on the stage; and had not Roger the Bumpkin, servant to the Justice, Sir Jacop Jollup,

cried out on the stage, 'Pray ye, gentlemen, pray ye, let Major Fish come to visit my master,' they actually would not have suffered me to pass; but from conscious shame and the hissing of the audience, I was at last (but not without much difficulty) permitted to enter; and I verily believe, had they not so pointedly marked their indignation, the bulk of the hearers would have passed the secret over as incomprehensible; but such a remarkable and violent contempt offered to me was easily perceived by them, and once conceived, their ideas swiftly communicated like gunpowder, when I came to the passage where Major Sturgeon relates to the Justice:—

“‘On we marched, the men all in high spirits, to attack the gibbet where Gardel is hanging; but turning down a narrow lane to the left, as it might be about there, in order to possess a pig's sty, that we might take the gallows in flank, and at all events secure a retreat, who should come by but a drove of fat oxen for Smithfield. The drums beat in the front, the dogs barked in the rear, the oxen set up a gallop; on they came thundering upon us, broke through our ranks in an instant, and threw the whole corps into confusion.’

“Now, reader, consider, that however *outré* and ridiculous this speech from fancy was formed by the author, Mr. Foote, the whole circumstance had in similarity happened that very day in every ludicrous point; and in consequence, the offended party swore that particular passage must be the offspring of my own brain, and done as an impudent and intentional disgrace to them; and when the tumult of laughter from the audience allowed permission for me to proceed with—‘The Major’s horse took fright, away he scoured over the heath. That gallant commander stuck both his spurs into the flank, and for some time held by his mane; but in crossing a ditch, the horse reared up his head, gave the Major a dowse in the chops, and threw that gallant commander into a ditch near the Powder Mills’—the officers were incensed to such a degree that they left the theatre in dudgeon, vowing vengeance. When I was undressed, and prepared to go to my own lodgings, I had information that a sergeant with five or six soldiers were in waiting, with orders, not only to beat unmercifully, but to duck poor Major Sturgeon in the river; so, instead of being lighted home, I acted as servant, after all my fatigue, and lighted others. I got to a house

where Mrs. Price and a Mrs. Lewis lived, and ordered the account of the house to be brought there and settled. Mr. Littlehale, a friend of mine, well known at Shrewsbury, was there. Dame Price (my tragedy queen at Portsmouth in 1757) escorted us upstairs; the kitchen had an entrance on each side of the house. She had undertaken as my old acquaintance to look well to my playhouse doors, and with an observant eye mind all was honour bright, where that tempting situation of taking money was transacted—that essential article for real kings, queens, generals, fine gentlemen, and fine ladies; for be it known, there is as much anxiety and suspicion on a benefit night out of London, and it is looked on as necessary to be as well guarded, as the bank of England when threatened with conflagration and a riot. Any gentleman who holds half an hour's noon conversation with an actor in the country, must have observed the following remarks and answers:—
‘The house on such a night was not well counted.’
‘Such a night the house was not well gathered.’
‘The checks were not right.’ ‘One of the door-keepers was seen to let up several without taking any money.’ ‘Another door-keeper took six shillings, but returned two to prove his honesty.’

“These sayings are often without foundation, but I am afraid at times are known to be *too true*. So Mrs. Price’s inspection into the deeds of the door-keepers, with thinking eyes, was truly necessary ; but Mr. Littlehale and I had not regaled an hour before every window below stairs was suddenly broken. The militia officers, at the head of some myrmidons, rushed into the house, and furiously demanded Wilkinson ; being assured I neither lodged nor visited there, they retired eagerly through the opposite door of the kitchen in determined search of their destined prey, having been at my lodgings first. However, on their departure I had that great restorative elixir, those golden drops, as Major O’Flaherty says, which healed all my grievances ; for out of an old crazy tin and some wooden boxes I poured a plentiful libation of gold and silver coin, the produce of Mexico and Peru, which presented as charming a lava as can be conceived.

“After my incredible fatigues and a comfortable bowl, I got safely to rest, and late the next day attended my good friend Chace Price. He declared he saw me with the utmost regret and chagrin, lamented his early departure from the theatre, as had he stayed he would have effectually

put a stop to such brutish outrage ; hoped I would think no more of it. If I imagined, he said, that the officers bespeaking a play with his name at the head would be of service, he would exert all his interest. I told him the accidental affray the night before dwelt on my mind with very disagreeable reflections, as the consequence might have proved dangerous. As to the play the next night, I desired it might be understood I had no advantage from it, nor would I receive any ; but as it would certainly serve the company, I accepted it so far as a compliment, and my services that evening he might command. He replied, "he was obliged to me," and ordered the players to perform 'The Recruiting Officer,' as the scene lay at Shrewsbury, and desired I would repeat Young Philpot in 'The Citizen.' He appointed Thursday instead of Wednesday ; as on the Wednesday he had a venison dinner, and devoted the day to his friends, amongst which number he honoured me, and insisted on my dining with him at the Raven on that occasion. I made my compliments in return, and assured him I would attend his summons with infinite pleasure. I was on that day a little after my time, a fault I have been often told of ; but on his left hand, at the upper

end of the table, the head seat had been purposely reserved for me, and the apparent intimacy and respect he honoured me with made the officers stare and think they were in the wrong box, by the contempt they wished to have shown the player. The dinner was good; the wine was good; but Chace Price was superior to both. Mirth went round, enjoying the feast of friendship and the flow of soul. Singing was mentioned; Chace Price said humorously he must first have a rehearsal; for, as his friend Wilkinson was going to leave Shrewsbury in a few days, without one he should be imperfect and forget his part; and begged the favour of me to repeat his favourite scene from the new farce of 'The Mayor of Garratt,' and if I would act the Major, he was certain he could recollect Sir Jacob Jollup, as he had seen it that summer in London so often; which was strictly true. His memory was excellent.

"Well, we acted the scene, which was highly relished. The good-humoured intention was smoked, and it ended with an afternoon and evening all in perpetual harmony; animosity or discord was no more thought of."

Such is a glimpse of an old provincial theatre which in its day nursed many useful performers

for the London stage. It had its use, too, in mollifying rustic manners, and imparting at least some elements of taste. In this excellent school, and from such rude trials as have been just described, the comedian learned self-reliance, and found his self-conceit—the bane of the rising actor—wholesomely corrected. Thus prepared, he was ready, when the chance offered, to take a creditable position on the London stage.

We shall now shift the scene to the great metropolitan houses, selecting each episode with a view to its being an illustration of some era in stage life and adventure.

CHAPTER IV.

THE STORY OF GEORGE ANNE BELLAMY.*

PERIOD—1750-80.

I.

A BEAUTIFUL woman whose chief attraction is in her beauty, is scarcely seen at her best upon the stage. This may seem a little strange, as it might reasonably be supposed that the position is peculiarly favourable to a display of natural charms. But more is requisite, as will be seen from the system that has recently prevailed, when it has become fashionable for a patron to take a theatre specially for the exhibition of some fair enslaver, who would otherwise have no opportunity of exhibiting her gifts. A glittering framework is thus provided for the picture: in other words the theatre is beautified at a vast expense, and a piece chosen so constructed as to provide for the display of at least one magnificent dress during each act. This rather inartistic system, by a curious

* Born 1731, died 1788.

law of retribution, is destructive of itself and its principles; for the beautiful woman, who has thus secured an advantage denied to the claims of her own gifts, is thrust into a situation of conspicuous responsibility which she has not strength to support, and the result is failure. This is owing to the ludicrous contrast between the pretentious and glittering surroundings and the feeble talent that is thus unduly adorned, while the experiment invariably fails, as many noble patrons have lately learned at a ruinous cost. It is curious that in France, where there is little regard for public decency, no such proceeding as this would be tolerated, and playgoers would not allow their interest in the stage to be sacrificed to the partiality of a wealthy patron.

In the last century, however, the beautiful woman found her way to the stage on more rigorous terms. The two great theatres of Drury Lane and Covent Garden offered a long list of stock tragedies and comedies, each an important, well-tried piece whose merits had been set off by a succession of fine actors and actresses. These parts became favourite tests of the abilities of rising players much as *Norma* and *Lucia*, *Gilda* or *Valentine*, are attempted by candidates on the operatic stage.

Such parts become gradually enriched by brilliant traditions, all the varied abilities of successive performers contributing. For one of our modern beautiful women, such a probation would be utterly disastrous, but in the last century it became an absolute necessity. She might have her patron who would help to secure the *entrée*, but the ability must be forthcoming. And there followed this happy result—that the stage was adorned with charming and attractive figures accompanied with talents of the highest order, while the audience was gratified with the spectacle of beauty and wit united. Mrs. Woffington, Mrs. Hartley, Mrs. Baddeley, Mrs. Yates, and Mrs. Bellamy, all adorned the stage and at the same time entertained the public. The pictures of these ladies—their superb dresses, handsome figures full of expression and grace—are singularly interesting; and certainly not the least attractive is the “blue-eyed Bellamy,” whose curious story shall now be presented. She was the illegitimate daughter of the Lord Tyrawley who is mentioned in no very complimentary terms by Pope—an old *roué*, who had served with some distinction in both diplomacy and in the wars. The young heroine, George Anne as she was christened, was brought up in a

French convent, but her father, who had been appointed ambassador to Russia, announced that he would not support her or her mother any longer. Thus abandoned, by a fortunate accident she attracted the notice of Rich, the manager of Covent Garden Theatre, who happened to be passing close to where some girls were rehearsing scraps of plays :

“Attracted, as he afterwards said, by the powerful sweetness of the Moor’s voice, which he declared to be superior to any he had ever heard, he listened without interrupting our performance ; but as soon as it was concluded, he entered the room, and paid me a thousand compliments on my theatrical abilities. Among other things he said, that in his opinion I should make one of the first actresses in the world ; adding, that if I could turn my thoughts to the stage, he should be happy to engage me.

“Not a little vain of receiving these encomiums from a person who from his situation must be a competent judge, I went home and informed my mother of what had happened. At first she was averse to my accepting the proposal, having experienced herself all the disadvantages attendant on a theatrical life ; but Mrs. Jackson uniting her persuasions to those of Mr. Rich, she at length consented.

She, however, complied only on conditions that the manager would assure her of his supporting me in a capital line. This Mr. Rich agreed to do.

“At the time I entered into an engagement with Mr. Rich, I was just fourteen ; of a figure not inelegant, a powerful voice, light as the gossamer, of inexhaustible spirits, and possessed of some humour. From these qualifications he formed the most sanguine hopes of my success, and determined that I should immediately make trial of them. I had perfected myself in the two characters of Monimia and Athenais, and according to my own judgment had made no inconsiderable proficiency in them. The former was fixed on for my first appearance.

“Mr. Rich now thought it time to introduce me to Mr. Quin, then the most capital performer at Covent Garden ; and capital he was, indeed, in those characters which his figure suited. This gentleman, at that period, governed the theatre with a rod of iron. Mr. Rich, though the proprietor, was, through his indolence, a mere cipher. After waiting some time at the door of the lion’s den, as the people of the theatre had denominated Mr. Quin’s dressing-room, we were at length admitted. It is necessary here to observe, that

this gentleman never condescended to enter the green-room, or to mix with the other performers, all of whom he was unacquainted with, except Mr. Ryan, for whom he entertained a particular friendship which lasted till Mr. Ryan's death.

“He no sooner heard Mr. Rich propose my appearing in the character of Monimia, than with the most sovereign contempt he cried out, ‘It will not do, sir!’ Upon which the manager, to his infinite surprise, replied, ‘It shall do, sir!’ I was so frightened at Mr. Quin’s austere deportment, that had he requested me to give him a specimen of my abilities, it would not have been in my power. But he held me too cheap to put me to the trial. After some further altercation had passed, which was not much in my favour, Mr. Quin at last deigned to look at me, saying at the same time, ‘Child, I would advise you to play Serina, before you think of Monimia.’ This sarcasm roused my spirits, which before were much sunk, and I pertly replied, ‘If I did, sir, I should never live to play the Orphan.’

“It may be supposed that this conversation was not very pleasing to me. As for Mr. Rich, the opposition he met with seemed to increase his resolution; and taking me by the hand, he led me

out of the dressing-room, assuring me aloud, that, let who would oppose, he would protect me ; and would let every one in the company know that he would be the master of it, when he chose to be at the trouble. Before he quitted the scenes, he ordered the prompter to call a rehearsal of 'The Orphan' the next morning. When that hour arrived, the two gentlemen who were to play my lovers, Castalio and Polydore, in order to pay their court to Mr. Quin, did not think proper to appear. Mr. Rich, however, to convince them he would be obeyed, fined them more than the usual mulct. Even Serina, who was only an attendant upon tragedy queens, smiled contemptuously on the poor Orphan.

“ Mr. Rich kindly endeavoured, by every means in his power, to support me under this mortifying opposition ; and he took a very effectual method of doing it. The dresses of the theatrical ladies were at this period very different. The empresses and queens were confined to black velvet except on extraordinary occasions, when they put on an embroidered or tissue petticoat. The young ladies generally appeared in a cast gown of some person of quality ; and as at this epoch the women of that denomination were not blest with the taste of the

present age, and had much more economy, the stage brides and virgins often made their appearance in altered habits, rather soiled. As the manager had in his juvenile days made the fair sex his principal study, and found the love of dress their darling foible, he concluded that, as a true daughter of Eve, I was not exempt from it. He therefore thought there could be no better method of putting me in a good humour with myself, and compensating for the affronts I had lately received, than by taking me to his mercer's, and permitting me to choose the clothes I was to appear in.

"The following morning Castalio and Polydore attended the rehearsal, but my brother Chamont was inexorable. Mr. Hale *mumbled over* Castalio, and Mr. Ryan *whistled* Polydore. This gentleman, from the accident of having been shot in the mouth by ruffians, had a tremor in his voice, which till you were accustomed to it, was very disagreeable. But from his utility in playing every night, the discordance of it grew familiar to the ear, and was not so displeasing.

"Mr. Ryan might truly have been denominated, in the theatrical phrase, a *wear-and-tear* man; that is, one who has constant employment, and fills a

part in almost every piece that is performed. This frequently occasioned his coming late to the theatre. I have known him come at the time the last music has been playing; when he has accosted the shoe-black at the stage door in his usual tremulous tone (which it is impossible to give those an idea of on paper that never heard it, but those who have will easily recollect it) with, ‘Boy, clean my shoes.’

“As soon as this needful operation has been performed, he has hastened to his dressing-room, and having hurried on an old laced coat and waistcoat, not a little the worse for wear, a tye-wig pulled buckishly over his forehead, and in the identical black worsted stockings he had on when he entered the house, ordered the curtain to be drawn up. Thus adorned, he would then make his appearance in the character of Lord Townley; and, in the very tone of voice in which he had addressed his intimate of the brush, exclaim,

‘Why did I marry; was it not evident,’ &c.

And in the same harsh monotony did that gentleman speak every part he played.

“It will likewise be seen from it, that the dress of the gentlemen, both of the sock and buskin, was

full as absurd as that of the ladies. Whilst the empresses and queens appeared in black velvet, and, upon extraordinary occasions, with the additional finery of an embroidered or tissue petticoat ; and the younger part of the females in cast gowns of persons of quality, or altered habits rather soiled—the male part of the *dramatis personæ* strutted in tarnished laced coats and waistcoats, full bottom or tye-wigs, and black worsted stockings.

“The dreaded evening at length arrived. Previous to it, Mr. Quin having in all companies declared it as his opinion that I should not succeed, Mr. Rich, on the contrary, having been as lavish in my praise, the public curiosity was much more excited than if there had been no contention about me. The curtain drew up to a splendid audience, which seldom happened at Covent Garden Theatre, except when a new or revived pantomime was represented.

“It is impossible to describe my sensations on my first entrance. I was so much dazzled by the lights and stunned by the repeated plaudits, that I was for some time deprived both of memory and voice. I stood like a statue. Till compassion for my youth, and probably some prepossession for my figure, and *dress*, which was *simply elegant*, a

circumstance not very customary, induced a gentleman who was dictator to the pit, and therefore ludicrously denominated Mr. Town (Mr. Chitty), to call out, and order the curtain to be dropped till I could recover my confusion.

“This caused Mr. Quin to exult so much, that Mr. Rich entreated me in the most earnest manner to exert my powers. But his entreaties were ineffectual; for when I made the next attempt my apprehensions so totally overpowered me, that I could scarcely be heard in the side boxes. The applause, indeed, was so universal, during the first act, for what did not reach the ears of the audience, that, had I possessed my full powers of exertion, they could not have profited by them.

“The manager having pledged himself for my success, he had planted all his friends in different parts of the house, to insure it. But when he found that I was unable to raise my spirits, he was as distracted as if his own fate, and that of his theatre, had depended upon it.

“He once more had recourse to persuasion and encouragement; but nothing could rouse me from my stupidity till the fourth act. This was the critical period which was to determine my fate. By this criterion was I, as an actress, to stand or

fall. When, to the astonishment of the audience, the surprise of the performers, and the exultation of the manager, I felt myself suddenly inspired. I blazed out at once with meridian splendour; and I acquitted myself throughout the whole of this most arduous part of the character, in which even many veterans have failed, with the greatest *éclat*.

“Mr. Quin was so *fascinated* (as he expressed himself) at this unexpected exertion, that he waited behind the scenes till the conclusion of the act; when, lifting me up from the ground in a transport, he exclaimed aloud, ‘Thou art a divine creature, and the true spirit is in thee!’ The audience, likewise, honoured me with the highest marks of their approbation. As for Mr. Rich, he expressed as much triumph upon this occasion as he usually did on the success of one of his darling pantomimes.

“The performers, who, half an hour before, had looked upon me as an object of pity, now crowded around me to load me with compliments of gratulation. And Mr. Quin, in order to compensate for the contempt with which he had treated me, was warmer, if possible in his eulogiums than he had been in his sarcasms.”

II.

“I had, at this period, the happiness to acquire the approbation and patronage of two ladies of the first distinction—the late Duchess of Montague, then Lady Cardigan, and her Grace of Queensberry. Both these ladies favoured me with their support, so far as to grace the theatre whenever I performed—an attention which was the more flattering, as the latter had not honoured a playhouse with her presence since the death of her favourite Gay.

“Some days before that fixed for my benefit, I received a message, whilst I was at the theatre, to be at Queensberry House the next day by twelve o’clock. As I thought it likewise incumbent on me to wait on the Countess of Cardigan, who had honoured me with equal marks of approbation, I dressed myself early, and, taking a chair, went first to Privy Garden. I had there every reason to be pleased with the reception her Ladyship gave me, who joined politeness to every virtue.

“But at Queensberry House, my reception was far otherwise. Her Grace was determined to mortify my vanity, before she promoted my interest. Quite elated with Lady Cardigan’s flattering

behaviour, I ordered the chairmen to proceed to Queensberry House. Soon after the rat-tat had been given, and my name announced to the porter, the groom of the chambers appeared. I desired him to acquaint her Grace, that I was come to wait upon her. But how was I surprised, when he returned and informed me, that her Grace knew no such person! My astonishment at this message was greatly augmented by the certainty I entertained of a ready admittance. I assured the domestic that it was by the Duchess's own directions I had taken the liberty to wait on her. To which he replied, that there must have been some mistake in the delivery of it. In this mortifying situation I had nothing to do but return home. Ludicrous and humiliating as the foregoing scene must be, I cannot avoid relating it, as it may serve as a lesson to many, who too readily give way to the impulses of vanity. Young minds are naturally prone to it. Mine consequently was. And this well-timed rebuke, however grating, was the greatest proof of regard her Grace could have given me.

"I went home with no very pleasing sensations, as I expected to receive the taunts of a female relation upon the occasion, who had lately arrived

from Ireland, and on whom my mother doted. As this person will be frequently mentioned in the course of my narrative, and was the cause of many of the inconveniences I afterwards suffered, it may not be amiss to acquaint you, that her deformed body was a fit receptacle for her depraved mind.

“Upon my entering the green-room, I was accosted by Prince Lobkowitz, who was then there in a public character, requesting a box at my benefit, for the *corps diplomatique*. After thanking his Highness for the honour intended me, I informed him that they might be accommodated with a stage box; and sending for the house-keeper, desired he would make an entry in his book to this purpose. But how great was my surprise, when he acquainted me I had not a box to dispose of; every one, except those of the Countess of Cardigan, the Duchess Dowager of Leeds, and Lady Shaftesbury, being retained for her Grace the Duchess of Queensberry. I could not help thinking but the man was joking, as he himself had delivered me the message from her Grace the night before, and that I found to be a deception. He however still persisted in what he said, and further added, that the Duchess had likewise sent for two hundred and fifty tickets. This made me more at a loss to

account for the cavalier treatment I had received in the morning.

“His Highness Prince Lobkowitz condescended to put up with a balcony for himself and friends; and I hastened home, at once to make known to my mother my good fortune, and to retaliate upon my inimical relation. To add to my satisfaction, when I got home, I found a note from her Grace, desiring I would wait upon her the next morning. This being such an evident proof of my veracity, which it had given me inexpressible uneasiness to have doubted, I experienced proportionable pleasure from it.

“I was, notwithstanding, so apprehensive of meeting with a second mortification, that I determined to *walk* to Queensberry House; to prevent any person’s being witness to it, should it happen. I accordingly set out on foot, and was not totally free from perturbation when I knocked at the gate. I was, however, immediately ushered to her Grace’s apartment, where my reception was as singular as my treatment had been the day before. Her Grace thus accosted me: ‘Well, young woman! What business had you in a chair yesterday? It was a fine morning, and you might have walked. You look as you ought to do now—

(observing my linen gown). Nothing is so vulgar as wearing silk in a morning. Simplicity best becomes youth. And you do not stand in need of ornaments. Therefore dress always plain, except when you are upon the stage.'

"Whilst her Grace was talking in this manner to me, she was cleaning a picture, which I officiously requested her permission to do ; she hastily replied, 'Don't you think I have domestics enough if I did not chose to do it myself?' I apologized for my presumption by informing her Grace that I had been for some time at Jones's, where I had been flattered that I had acquired a tolerable proficiency in that art. The Duchess upon this exclaimed, 'Are you the girl I have heard Chesterfield speak of?' Upon my answering that I had the honour of being known to his Lordship, she ordered a canvas bag to be taken out of her cabinet, saying, 'No person can give Queensberry less than gold. There are two hundred and fifty guineas, and twenty for the Duke's tickets and mine ; but I must give you something for Tyrawley's sake.' She then took a bill from her pocket-book, which having put into my hands, she told me her coach was ordered to carry me home, lest any accident should happen to me, now I had such a charge about me.

“Though the conclusion of her Grace’s whim, as it might justly be termed, was more pleasing than the beginning of it, and her munificence much greater than that of the Countess of Cardigan, yet I must acknowledge I was much better pleased with the reception I met with from her Ladyship, who honoured me with her protection whilst I continued on the stage.

“My benefit surpassed my most sanguine expectations. And as I had by this time many who professed themselves my admirers, they had, upon this occasion, an opportunity of showing their generosity without offending my delicacy.

“Among those who paid me the greatest degree of attention was Lord Byron, a nobleman who had little to boast of but a title and an agreeable face; and Mr. Montgomery, since Sir George Metham. As I would not listen to any proposals but marriage and a coach,* Mr. Montgomery honestly told me, early in his devoirs, that he could not comply with the first, as his only dependence was on his father, whose consent he could not hope to procure; and as for the latter, he could not afford it. Having come to this *éclaircissement*, he immediately retired into Yorkshire.

* The reader will note the business-like character of this record.

The generous conduct of this gentleman (whose passion I was well convinced was sincere) in not attempting to deceive me, made an impression upon my mind greatly in his favour.

“Lord Byron still pursued me ; and as his vanity was hurt at my rejecting him, he formed a resolution to be revenged of me for my insensibility. His Lordship was very intimate with a person who was a disgrace to nobility ; and whose name I shall conceal through tenderness to his family. This nobleman was Lord Byron’s confidential friend ; and to this friend Lord Byron committed the execution of his revenge.

“His Lordship frequently called at Mrs. Jackson’s, though much against my mother’s inclinations. But as he had been constantly a dangler behind the scenes during her engagement at the theatre, and had occasionally given her franks, she admitted his visits. My mother had strictly enjoined me to break off my intimacy with the young lady who was the object of the Earl’s pursuit, on account of her levity ; and because, though by birth a gentlewoman, she had degraded herself by becoming the companion of a lady of quality who had frequently eloped from her lord.

“My mother at this period was become a con-

firmed devotee. Religion engrossed so much of her time, that in the evening she was seldom visible. Upon this account, and from Mrs. Jackson's accompanying me so frequently to Mr Quin's suppers, that lady conferred a great part of the friendly regard she had once borne my mother to me. But alas ! I was not to profit long by this revolution. My happiness was to be as transient as the sunshine of an April day.

“One Sunday evening, when this ignoble Earl well knew my mother would be engaged, he called to inform me that the young lady before mentioned was in a coach at the end of Southampton Street, and desired to speak with me. Without staying to put on my hat or gloves, I ran to the coach ; when, to my unspeakable surprise, I found myself suddenly hoisted into it by his Lordship, and that the coachman drove off as fast as the horses could gallop.

“My astonishment for some time deprived me of the power of utterance ; but when I was a little recovered, I gave free vent to my reproaches. These his Lordship bore with a truly philosophic indifference, calmly telling me that no harm was intended me ; and that I had better consent to make his friend Lord Byron happy, and be happy

myself, than oppose my good fortune. To this he added that his friend was shortly to be married to Miss Shaw, a young lady possessed of a very large fortune, which would enable him to provide handsomely for me. I was so struck with the insolence of this proposal that I remained for some time quite silent.

“At length the coach stopped in a lonely place at the top of North Audley Street, fronting the fields. At that time Oxford Street did not extend so far as it does at present. Here the Earl got out, and took me into his house. He then went away, as he said, to prepare a lodging for me, which he had already seen at a mantua-maker’s in Broad Street, Carnaby Market, and to which he would come back and take me. He assured me the mistress of the house was a woman of character; and added, with the most dreadful imprecations, that no violence was intended.

“His Lordship now left me. And as the fear of great evils banishes every lesser consideration, I determined to wait the result, with all the patience I was possessed of. The dread of being left alone in that solitary place, was nothing when compared with my apprehensions from the machinations of two noblemen so determined and so powerful.

Terror, however, so totally overwhelmed my mind, that I remained in a state of stupefaction.

“It was not long before his Lordship returned ; and with him came the person I least expected to see—my own brother. Good heavens ! what comfort, at so critical a juncture, did the sight of him afford me ! I instantly flew into his arms ; but was repulsed by him in so violent a manner, that I fell to the ground. The shock of this unexpected repulse, just as I hoped to have found a protector in him, was more than my spirits were able to bear. It deprived me of my senses. On my return to sensibility, the only object that presented itself to my view was an old female servant, who told me she had orders to convey me to the lodging which had been prepared for me.

“The first thing I did was to make inquiry concerning my brother’s coming so unexpectedly. I was informed by the old woman, that he had bestowed manual chastisement upon my ravisher. But as he seemed to suppose that I had consented to the elopement, he had declared he would never see me more, but leave me to my fate. The woman added, that he had threatened the Earl and his associate with a prosecution, which had so intimidated her master, that he had given her

orders to remove me out of his house as soon as possible ; as my being found there might make against him.

“When we arrived in Broad Street, I discovered, to my great satisfaction, that the mistress of the house, whose name was Mirvan, worked for me as a mantua-maker, though I was till now unacquainted with her place of residence. I told her my story simply as it happened ; and my appearance, as well as my eyes, which were much swelled with crying, was an undeniable testimony of the truth of my assertions.

“I afterwards learned the following circumstances relative to my brother, about whom I was more anxious than for myself, as I had a great affection for him. We had long expected him to return from sea, he having been abroad for some years ; and by one of those extraordinary freaks of fortune which are not to be accounted for, he got to the top of Southampton Street just as the coach was driving off with me. I should have termed his coming providential, had he not suffered his suspicions to get the better of his affection, and thus counteracted the apparent designs of Providence in affording me relief.

“He had reached Southampton Street, as I

have just said, nearly about the time I was forced into the coach; and ran to rescue the person thus treated, little imagining it was his own sister; but the furious driving of the coachman rendered his designs abortive. Upon this he proceeded to Mrs. Jackson's house, and had scarcely inquired for me, than that lady cried out, 'Oh fly, sir, to her relief; Lord —— has this moment run away with her.' My brother hearing this, concluded I must have been the person he had just seen carried off. But knowing it would be impossible to overtake the coach, he thought it more prudent to go directly to the Earl's house. Not finding him at home, he walked about within sight of the door, till his Lordship returned, when he accosted him in the manner before related. From the Earl of——'s, my brother went to Marlborough Street to Lord Byron's; and accusing him of being concerned with the Earl in seducing his sister, his Lordship denied having any knowledge of the affair, which he solemnly asserted *upon his honour*; declaring at the same time, as indeed he could do with a greater degree of truth, that he had not seen me that evening.

"My brother, placing an implicit confidence in the assertions of Lord Byron, grew enraged against

me, without making any inquiries whether I was really culpable upon this occasion or not. Giving me over, therefore, as a lost abandoned girl, he immediately set out for Portsmouth, and left me unprotected. This I may justly consider as the most unfortunate event I had hitherto experienced ; for, being deprived of his protection at a time when it was so extremely requisite to my re-establishment in life, I was left open to the attacks of every insolent pretender, whose audacity his very character, as he was distinguished for his bravery, would have repressed."

III.

After the scandal of this episode had subsided, the heroine accepted an engagement at Dublin ; and the picture of life and stage manners then presented is highly characteristic. The brutality of the fashionable gentlemen of the day is unpleasantly conspicuous :—

"As soon as I was recovered from the fatigue of my journey, I went to pay my respects to Mrs. O'Hara, Lord Tyrawley's sister, who had not seen me since I was an infant. To my great grief I found her blind. She was much pleased with my

visit, but she did not greatly approve of the profession I had chosen. However, as I went by the name of my mother's husband, to which alone I had a right, being born after their marriage, my engagement in the theatrical line could not bring *public* disgrace on her family. She, notwithstanding, proposed herself to introduce me to all her acquaintance as *her niece*; which she accordingly did, as the acknowledged daughter of Lord Tyrawley.

"Mrs. O'Hara kindly inquired into the state of my finances, which gave me an opportunity of making her acquainted with the Duchess of Queensberry's liberality to me, and likewise with the mortification I had received from her Grace at the same time; with which she seemed much entertained. I even informed her of the event which had been the cause of so much unhappiness to me. It is an established maxim with me, never to rest satisfied with gaining the good opinion of any person by halves. In the afternoon the honourable Mrs. Butler and her daughter were announced. Mrs. O'Hara introduced me as her niece, and added an eulogium which I by no means merited; and as this lady was a leading woman in the fashionable world, had great

interest, and her house was frequented by most of the nobility, Mrs. O'Hara solicited her protection for me. Mrs. Butler was elegant in her figure, and had been very pretty, of which there were still some remains; but the decay of her beauty appeared to be more the result of indisposition than age. Her daughter was handsome, spirited, sensible, and good-humoured. She was nearly of the same age with myself, and seemed, even at this first interview, to have contracted a partiality for me, which I reciprocally wished to cultivate. Before the ladies took their leave, they engaged my aunt and me to come the next day to Stephen's Green to dine and spend the evening.

"When I returned home, I found our fellow-traveller, Mr. Crump, *tête-à-tête* with my mother. She informed me that Miss St. Ledger, one of the three ladies I had become acquainted with some years before at Mrs. Jones's, had called and requested to see me the next morning, at Lady Doneraile's, in Dawson Street. Thus, from having no female acquaintance in London, except my own family, I was now *en train* to be introduced into the first circle in Dublin. The next morning I went to breakfast with Miss St. Ledger, by whom I was received with all that politeness she so

eminently possessed, actuated by the cordial warmth usually felt by the susceptible on embracing a loved intimate after a long absence. She inquired in the kindest manner after Miss Conway ; and was much affected at hearing that her friend was in a declining state of health, occasioned by her constant attendance on the Princess of Wales, to whom she was a Maid of Honour, which prevented her from taking the necessary steps for her recovery. She pressed me to stay dinner, but when I informed her that I was pre-engaged, and told her by whom, she politely said she was then happy, even in being deprived of my company ; as the acquaintance of Mrs. Butler was the most desirable of any in Dublin, and would prove most agreeable and beneficial to me. She at the same time much regretted that she was deprived of the pleasure of frequenting that lady's house, which was occasioned by some umbrage her aunt, Lady Doneraile, with whom she resided, had given her.

“My reception at the Green, when I went to dinner, was of the most flattering kind. It exceeded even my warmest hopes ; and Mrs. Butler avowed herself my patroness, notwithstanding she had not yet had an opportunity of acquiring a knowledge

whether I really deserved that honour. When I took leave, she obligingly requested that I would pass every hour, not appropriated to the business of the theatre, at her house; which you may be assured I did not fail readily to promise.

“The theatre opened with *éclat*. And what was very fortunate for me, the Earl of Chesterfield was at that time Viceroy. Mr. Barry had made some figure on this stage the preceding winter, in the character of Othello; and upon my being engaged, the manager wrote to him to study that of Castalio, as he proposed I should early appear in ‘The Orphan.’ To add to our success, Mr. Garrick joined the company this season. Having some dispute with the proprietor of Drury Lane Theatre, and Mr. Rich declining to give him the terms he required, he came to Dublin. Three such capital performers as Garrick, Sheridan, and Barry, in one company, was a circumstance that had scarcely ever happened. I was obliged to appear almost every night; and sometimes in characters very unfit for me. The great applause that I received, however, spurred me on, and excited in me the strongest endeavours to deserve it. And that I might at once pay a proper attention to the duties of my profession, and have time to

enjoy the society of my new friends, I scarcely allowed myself even that portion of rest which nature requires. A good constitution, however, and inexhaustible spirits, enabled me to go through the season.

“After some time, the tragedy of ‘King John’ was proposed, wherein Roscius and the manager were to appear together, and play alternately the King and the Bastard. Upon this occasion Mr. Sheridan insisted on my playing Constance; whilst Mr. Garrick objected to it, as there would then be no person to play Prince Arthur, but the late Mrs. Kennedy, at that time Miss Orpheur, who was nearly of the same age as myself, and from being hard-favoured looked much older.

“Upon Mr. Garrick’s absolute rejection of my appearance in the character on which I had set my heart, and for the performance of which I had stipulated in my articles, I flew to my patroness, Mrs. Butler, to complain of the breach of them. Notwithstanding her partiality for Mr. Garrick, so highly did I stand in her favour, that she immediately sent round to all her friends, to request they would not go to the play the evening it was performed. Besides the consequence of family and fortune, this lady possessed very great

power in the genteel world. To this may be added, that as she frequently gave balls, all the young ladies that were usually invited were always ready to oblige her in any request of this nature, to insure themselves a place at those entertainments. And every one of these readily obeyed, and spread abroad her injunctions. The house, on the night 'King John' was performed for the first time, was, of course, very thin. The receipts did not amount to forty pounds.

"This was the first theatrical humiliation the immortal Roscius ever met with; and he severely repented preferring Mrs. Furnival, who played the character of Constance, to my little self. But what completed my triumph was, that when the same play was again performed, and Mr. Sheridan played the King, Garrick the Bastard, and myself Constance, more people were turned away than could get places; and the dispute relative to the characters which had lately happened made the audience receive me with the warmest marks of approbation.

"But notwithstanding this success, I was determined to return the mortification Mr. Garrick had been the cause of to me, the very first opportunity

that presented itself; and it was not long before one offered. This *LITTLE great man* was to have two benefits during the season; and, that they might not come too near each other, it was agreed that he should have one of them early in it. He had fixed on 'Jane Shore' for his first benefit; and on application being made to me to perform that character, I absolutely refused it, alleging the objection he had made to my playing Constance, namely, my youth. Finding that entreaties were ineffectual, he prevailed on Mrs. Butler to make use of her interest with me; sensible that I could not refuse the solicitations of a lady to whom I was bound, not only by the ties of gratitude, but those of policy. And whilst he made this application, that he might leave no method of obtaining my consent untried, he wrote me a note at the same time, which occasioned the following laughable incident, and furnished conversation for the whole city of Dublin.

"In his note he informed me, 'that if I would oblige him, he would write me a *goody-goody* epilogue; which, with the help of my eyes, should do more mischief than ever the flesh or the devil had done since the world began.' This ridiculous epistle he directed 'To my soul's idol, the beautified

Ophelia ;' and delivered it to his servant, with orders to bring it to me. But the fellow having some more agreeable amusement to pursue than going on his master's errands, he gave it to a porter in the street without having attended to the curious direction that was on it. The porter, upon reading the superscription, and not knowing throughout the whole city of Dublin any lady of quality who bore the title either of 'My Soul's Idol,' or 'The beautified Ophelia,' naturally concluded that it was intended to answer some jocular purpose. He accordingly carried it to his master, who happened to be a newsman; and by his means it got the next day into the public prints. The inditer of this high-flown epistle, it must be supposed, was not a little mortified at its publication. Nor was my mother, who was always awake for my reputation, without her alarms, lest it should injure my character; but that, thank Heaven, was too well established to be endangered by so ridiculous an accident.

"After a reconciliation between Mr. Garrick and myself had been effected, he visited much oftener at Colonel Butler's than usual. The Colonel had a seat on the sea-coast, not many miles from Dublin; and my mother thinking that bathing in

the sea would be of great benefit to my health, she took a furnished house at the Sheds of Clontarf for that purpose. She fixed on this spot, that I might at the same time be near my much-loved companion, Miss Butler; between whom and myself as inseparable a connection had taken place as if it had been cemented by the ties of blood.

“At the conclusion of the season, Mr. Garrick prepared to return to England with the rich harvest that had crowned his toils. Mrs. Butler, who had a taste for wit, was as fond of his company as her amiable daughter was of mine. Some days before Mr. Garrick’s departure for England, as Mrs. Butler, her daughter, myself, and some other company, were walking on the terrace, we had the satisfaction to see the much-admired hero come galloping up to the house. He soon joined us; and to the great regret of us all, particularly Mrs. Butler, announced his intention of leaving Dublin the next day. Whilst we were engaged in conversation, the lady of the house went away abruptly; but soon returned, bearing in her hand a sealed packet, which she delivered to Roscius, thus addressing him at the same time:—‘I here present you, Mr. Garrick, with something more valuable than life. In it you will read my

sentiments ; but I strictly enjoin you not to open it till you have passed the Hill of Howth.' We all looked surprised at this extraordinary presentation, especially Colonel Butler's chaplain, who was one of the party. As the lady inclined somewhat to prudery, and had always appeared to be governed by the most rigid rules of virtue, we could none of us guess the purport of the present, though her conduct seemed to admit of a doubtful interpretation. But Garrick, who was as conscious of possessing nature's liberal gifts as any man breathing, took the packet with a significant graceful air ; concluding, without hesitation, that it contained, not only a valuable present (the giver having the power as well as the disposition to be generous), but a declaration of such tender sentiments as her virtue would not permit her to make known to him whilst he remained in the kingdom.

"After dinner Mr. Garrick took his leave, and he was no sooner departed, than Mrs. Butler informed the company that the contents of the valuable packet with which she had presented her visitor, were nothing more than 'Wesley's Hymns,' and 'Dean Swift's Discourse on the Trinity'; adding that he would have leisure during his voyage to study the one and to digest the other. You may be

assured that we all enjoyed the joke. As for my own part, I could scarcely keep my risible faculties in any order, when my imagination presented to me Garrick's disappointment at finding the contents of the packet so very different from what he had concluded them to be. I must inform you that at our next meeting Mr. Garrick acquainted me, that upon opening the packet, and seeing what it contained, he was so much chagrined, that he, in the most heathenish manner, offered them up a sacrifice to Neptune. In plain English, he threw both Mr. Wesley and the Dean, cheek-by-jowl, into the sea. . . .

"Early in the season (1746) the tragedy of 'All for Love, or The World Well Lost,' was revived; in which Barry and Sheridan stood unrivalled in the characters of Antony and Ventidius. The getting it up produced the following extraordinary incidents. The manager, in an excursion he had made during the summer to London, had purchased a superb suit of clothes that had belonged to the Princess of Wales, and had been only worn by her on the birth-day. This was made into a dress for me to play the character of Cleopatra; and as the ground of it was silver tissue, my mother thought that by turning the body of it in,

it would be a no unbecoming addition to my waist, which was remarkably small. My maid-servant was accordingly sent to the theatre to assist the dresser and mantua-maker in preparing it; and also in sewing on a number of diamonds, my patroness not only having furnished me with her own, but borrowed several others of her acquaintance for me. When the women had finished the work, they all went out of the room, and left the door of it indiscreetly open.

“Mrs. Furnival (who owed me a grudge, on account of my eclipsing her, as the more favourable reception I met with from the public gave her room to conclude I did; and likewise for the stir which had been made last season about the character of Constance) accidentally passed by the door of my dressing-room in the way to her own, as it stood open. Seeing my rich dress thus lying exposed, and observing no person by to prevent her, she stepped in and carried off the Queen of Egypt’s paraphernalia, to adorn herself in the character of Octavia, the Roman matron, which she was to perform. By remarking from time to time my dress, which was very different from the generality of heroines, Mrs. Furnival had just acquired taste enough to despise the black velvet

in which those ladies were usually habited. And without considering the impropriety of enrobing a Roman matron in the habiliments of the Egyptian Queen ; or perhaps not knowing that there was any impropriety in it, she determined, for once in her lifetime, to be as fine as myself, and that at my expense ; she accordingly set to work to let out the clothes which, through my mother's economical advice, had been taken in.

“When my servant returned to the room, and found the valuable dress that had been committed to her charge missing, her fright and agitation were beyond expression. She ran like a mad creature about the theatre, inquiring of every one whether they had seen anything of it. At length she was informed that Mrs. Furnival had got possession of it : when, running to that lady's dressing-room, she was nearly petrified at beholding the work which had cost her so much pains undone. My damsel's veins, unfortunately for Mrs. Furnival, were rich with the blood of the O'Bryens. Thus qualified, she at first demanded the dress with tolerable civility ; but meeting with a peremptory refusal, the blood of her great forefathers boiled within her veins, and without any more ado, she fell tooth and nail upon poor Mrs.

Furnival. So violent was the assault, that had not assistance arrived in time to rescue her from the fangs of the enraged Hibernian nymph, my theatrical rival would probably have never had an opportunity of appearing once in her life adorned with *real* jewels.

“When I came to the theatre, I found my servant dissolved in tears at the sad disaster; for notwithstanding her heroic exertions, she had not been able to bring off the cause of the contest. But so far was I from partaking of her grief, that I could not help being highly diverted at the absurdity of the incident. Nothing concerning a theatre could at that time affect my temper, except the disappointment I had met with in not appearing in the part of Constance, as before related. I sent indeed for the jewels; but the lady, rendered courageous by Nantz, and the presence of her paramour Morgan, who was not yet dead, condescended to send me word that I should have them after the play.

“In this situation I had no other resource than to reverse the dresses, and appear as plain in the character of the luxurious Queen of Egypt as Antony’s good wife, although the sister of Cæsar, ought to have been. In the room of precious

stones, with which my dress should have been decorated, I substituted pearls; and of all my finery I retained only my diadem, that indispensable mark of royalty.

“Every transaction that takes place in the theatre, and every circumstance relative to it, are as well known in Dublin as they would be in a country town. The report of the richness and elegance of my dress had been universally the subject of conversation for some time before the night of performance, when, to the surprise of the audience, I appeared in white satin. My kind patroness, who sat in the stage-box, seemed not to be able to account for such an unexpected circumstance. And not seeing me adorned with the jewels she had lent me, she naturally supposed I had reserved my regalia till the scene in which I was to meet my Antony.

“When I had first entered the green-room, the manager, who expected to see me splendidly dressed, as it was natural to suppose the enchanting Cleopatra would have been upon such an occasion, expressed with some warmth his surprise at a disappointment, which he could only impute to caprice. Without being in the least discomposed by his warmth, I coolly told him, “that I had taken the advice Ventidius had sent me, by Alexis,

and had parted with both my clothes and jewels to Antony's wife.' Mr. Sheridan could not conceive my meaning ; but as it was now too late to make any alteration, he said no more upon the subject. He was not, however, long at a loss for an explanation ; for, going to introduce Octavia to the Emperor, he discovered the jay in all her borrowed plumes. An apparition could not have more astonished him. He was so confounded, that it was some time before he could go on with his part. At the same instant Mrs. Butler exclaimed aloud, ' Good Heaven, the woman has got on my diamonds ! ' The gentlemen in the pit concluded that Mrs. Butler had been robbed of them by Mrs. Furnival ; and the general consternation occasioned by so extraordinary a scene is not to be described.* But the audience observing Mr. Sheridan to smile, they supposed there was some mystery in the affair, which induced them to wait with patience till the conclusion of the act. As soon as it was finished, they bestowed their applause upon Antony and his faithful veteran ; but, as if they had all been animated by the same mind, they cried out, ' No more Furnival ! No more Furnival ! ' The fine-dressed

* Remarks of this kind from the audience were part of the theatrical license of the time. The whole is a most curious picture.

lady, disappointed of the acclamations she expected to receive on account of the grandeur of her habiliments, and thus hooted for the impropriety of her conduct, very prudently called fits to her aid, which incapacitated her from appearing again, and the audience had the good-nature to wait patiently till Mrs. Elmy, whom curiosity had led to the theatre, had dressed to finish the part. But the next night, either inspired with the brilliancy of my ornaments, or animated by the sight of his Excellency Lord Chesterfield, who, together with his Lady, graced the theatre, it was the general opinion that I never played with so much spirit, or did greater justice to a character. The applause I received was universal.

“A gentleman who stood near the stage door, took a very unallowable method of showing his approbation. Being a little flushed with liquor, or otherwise I am persuaded he could not have been capable of the rudeness, he put his lips to the back of my neck as I passed him. Justly enraged at so great an insult, and not considering that the Lord Lieutenant was present, or that it was committed before such a number of spectators, I instantly turned about, and gave the gentleman a slap on the face. Violent and unbecoming as this

sudden token of resentment appeared, it received the approbation of Lord Chesterfield, who rose from his seat and applauded me for some time with his hands; the whole audience, as you may suppose, following his example. At the conclusion of the act Major Macartney came, by order of his Excellency, to Mr. St. Leger (that was the gentleman's name), requesting that he would make a public apology for this forgetfulness of decorum; which he accordingly did. I have reason to believe that this incident contributed, in a great measure, to a reform that Mr. Sheridan, with great propriety, soon after made. Agreeable to this regulation, no gentlemen, in future, were to be admitted behind the scenes. . . .

“Not long after as I was performing the part of Lady Townley, in ‘The Provoked Husband,’ I received a card from Mrs. Butler, wrote in a servant's hand, requesting me to come to her house as soon as I should be at liberty. As the note was delivered to me during the performance of the play I had only leisure just to send verbally, with my compliments, that the fatigue of the evening would prevent me from being able to do myself that honour.

Had I attended to the circumstance of the card

being written by a servant, I must have been convinced that something was wrong; as my dear friend Miss Butler was always happy in seizing every occasion to write to me. It, however, passed unnoticed. Not long after, I received another note, informing me that I must absolutely come the moment I had finished, and even without waiting to change my dress. So very pressing an invitation I own excited my curiosity, and made me impatient for the conclusion of my business.

“My task being done, I got into my chair in the same dress in which I had played the character of Lady Townley, and hastened away to Stephen’s Green. As the dress I wore was a modern one, there was no great impropriety in my appearing with it off the stage. Just as I entered one door of the parlour in which Mrs. Butler and her female visitors were, the Colonel, and several gentlemen, who had just risen from their bottle, were ushered in at the opposite one. The company was numerous; and the elegance of my dress attracted the attention of all the gentlemen; but not one of the ladies condescended to speak to me. Even the lady whose guest I was only deigned to welcome me, on my entrance, with a formal declination of her head.

“A reception so different from what I had been accustomed to in that hospitable mansion, not only surprised, but greatly shocked me. In this agitation of mind, I made up to Mrs. O’Hara, who was present, and requested she would inform me what was the occasion of it. The answer I received from her was that a few minutes would determine whether she should ever notice me again.

“A gentleman now made his *entrée*, whose figure—shape, dress, and address exceeded everything I had ever beheld before. The ladies, notwithstanding, continued to look as serious and demure as a convocation of old maids met on purpose to dissect the reputation of a giddy, thoughtless young one. Nor did this beautiful stranger, with all his attractions, seem to be less neglected than myself. From being in such company, and in such a splendid dress, for my head was adorned with the jewels of my patroness, the gentleman might naturally conclude that I was a person of quality.

“From this motive, or some other, his attention appeared to be fixed on me, in preference to any of the other ladies; and he introduced himself to me with an air so easy and confident, that I knew immediately that he had travelled. He acquainted

me that he was just returned from making the *grand tour*, and was come to take possession of his estate, and settle for the remainder of his days in Ireland. We then entered into conversation on different subjects, in which I acquitted myself with more ease than I expected I could have done in a state of such suspense.

“The test intended for the discovery of some dubious points, which will presently be known, having now been carried on as long as necessary, Miss Butler was sent to put a stop to our *tête-à-tête*, when my Ganymede, whose curiosity had been on tiptoe to find out who I was, went to the upper end of the room to make the needful inquiries of the lady of the house. Having in a whisper asked the question, Mrs. Butler answered aloud, ‘Surely you must know her. I am certain you know her; nay, that you are well acquainted with her.’ The gentleman, not a little disconcerted at this want, in a lady of fashion, of what is usually termed *au monde*, that is, among other things, replying to a whisper in an audible voice; assuring her, still in a low tone, that he had never seen me before, and now felt himself greatly interested in the inquiry. ‘Fie, fie, Mr. Medlicote,’ returned my patroness, ‘what can you say for yourself, when I inform

you, *that this is the dear girl whose character you so cruelly aspersed at dinner?*'

"I now plainly perceived, that this accomplished gentleman, vain of his attractive graces, had boasted, like too many others, of favours he had never received, not knowing that he did so in the presence of my best friends, and that there was a certainty of his false assertions being detected. The pencil of Hogarth alone could justly depicture the confusion of the gentleman at this discovery of his treachery ; or of my petrification at finding myself the subject of his slander. It for some time totally deprived me of the use of every faculty. Till at length my patroness kindly relieved me from the situation in which I was absorbed. Coming up to me, she took me by the hand, and with a smile on her countenance thus addressed me: 'My dear child, you have gone through a fiery trial ; but it was a very necessary one. This gentleman has vilely traduced your character. We were all perfectly convinced that you did not merit what he said of you ; but had he seen you first at the theatre instead of here, he would, doubtlessly, have maintained his assertions with oaths, and there would then have been no possibility of contradicting him, however favourably we may have thought of you,

notwithstanding.' Having said this, she embraced me in the most cordial manner. And as soon as I got from her embrace, I ran and threw myself into the arms of my dear aunt, who seemed to feel the utmost satisfaction at my triumph.

"As for my traducer, it may be supposed he did not long disgust us with his company. Charming and accomplished as he was, there did not appear to be a wish among us all to detain him.

"In the morning, after a restless night, I found myself in a fever. My friends, were greatly alarmed. Mrs. Butler and her beloved daughter did me the honour to pay me a visit, and my absence from the theatre was considered as a general calamity. My indisposition increased; and it was several days before I was able to attend at the theatre. When I did so, a disagreeable event happened, which retarded my perfect recovery, and, with some other concurrent circumstances, was the cause of my leaving Ireland.

"Mr. Sheridan, in consequence of the insult I had received from Mr. St. Leger, as before related, and on account of the inconveniences arising from the custom, had given a general order at the doors of the theatre, and notice in all public papers, that no gentleman was, on any account, to be admitted

behind the scenes. It happened one night, just as I was so far recovered as to venture to the house, but not to perform, that an officer, who had more wine in his head than humanity in his heart, insisted on passing the sentry placed at the stage door. The poor fellow persisting in his refusal of admittance, the officer drew his sword and stabbed him in the thigh, with so much violence, that the weapon broke, and left a piece in the most dangerous part. Hearing a riot on the stage, I ran from the box in which I sat, and flew in my fright to the next sentinel for protection. This happening to be the man who had been wounded, I found myself in a moment encompassed by numbers, and was obliged to be a witness to the broken steel being taken out. The unexpectedness of this scene and the terrors I was thrown into by it, as I was not perfectly restored to health, were productive of a relapse. The man, however, happily recovered through the placidness of his disposition; but having lost the use of his leg, the offender, who was a man of quality, provided for him for life.

“I have already observed that Mr. Sheridan was held in high estimation by the people of Dublin. The young gentlemen belonging to the college looked upon him as a divinity. The ladies of his

acquaintance flattered him; and his own vanity misguided him."

He revived the play of 'Æsop' for the new season.

"There was no doubt but Mr. Sheridan, who must be allowed to be the best declaimer that ever trod our stage, would have made a very capital figure in a character which was so conspicuously marked out for his talents, had not the performance been interrupted on the first night of its representation. The house was so much crowded, that a person, I will not so far degrade the title of gentleman as to bestow on him that appellation, finding himself inconveniently situated in the pit, got over the spikes which divided that part from the stage. This removal received marks of approbation from many of the audience, who by no means approved of the new regulation, which debarred them from coming behind the scenes. Mr. Kelly (that was the person's name) was not a little pleased that he had escaped from his confined situation, and at the same time showed by his manœuvre an appearance of courage, which he was conscious he did not really possess.

"Elevated with his success, he made his way to the green-room. Having heard much of the liber-

ties taken by the gentlemen with the performers, during the time that they were admitted behind the scenes, I had adopted Mr. Quin's mode of confining myself to my dressing-room. But being apprehensive that I was not perfect in a scene which was mostly lines, and which I was to repeat in the next act, I went into the green-room to request Mrs. Dyer to run it over with me.

"When I entered the room, I observed that lady to be greatly confused, and that she could not move out of an arm-chair in which she sat, from a man's impeding her. She whispered me as I drew near, that Kelly had most grossly insulted her. Upon which, not considering the brutality of a drunken man, particularly of an illiterate Irishman when drunk, I asked her why she staid to hear him. I had no sooner said this, than I observed I had offended the brute, and accordingly ran out of the green-room into my dressing-room, which adjoined to it. When I got in, I prudently locked the door, judging that a wretch who could dare to insult a woman with an indelicate conversation, would dastardly strike or misuse any of the sex on a supposed offence. It was a very providential circumstance that I had pursued this step; for I had scarcely done so, when Kelly pursued me,

and attempted to force the door; at the same time swearing vengeance against me. The noise which Kelly made at my dressing-room door alarmed the audience, and drew the manager to inquire into the cause of it. Finding Kelly thus riotously disposed, he desired him to quit the scenes. The other refusing, Mr. Sheridan ordered him to be turned out by force. He now found room in the pit, as several of the manager's friends, on hearing the disturbance, had left their places, and gone into his room to learn the occasion of it. The play proceeded till we were come to the first scene of the last act, when an orange or apple was thrown at Mr. Sheridan, who played the character of *Æsop*, and so well directed, that it dented the iron of the false nose which he wore, into his forehead.

“Mr. Sheridan was not only born and bred a gentleman, but possessed as much personal courage as any man breathing. It may, therefore, be supposed, that he would not put up with such an indignity. He went forward, and addressed the audience, or the person that was supposed to throw it; but what he said, my fright prevented me from hearing. The curtain was then dropped, and the piece left unfinished. The foolish being who had occasioned this confusion, Kelly, now went to

the manager's room to demand satisfaction. And this he immediately gave him in the most ample manner, with an oak stick which, as Æsop, he had carried in his hand during the performance ; whilst Kelly, to the great entertainment of such of Mr. Sheridan's friends as were present, fell upon the ground in tears, crying out at the same time, that he should severely repent this usage to a gentleman.' To the disgrace of the military (for he wore a cockade during this humiliating scene), Mr. Kelly had a sword by his side.

"When the manager had given Kelly this severe correction for his insolence and brutality, he suffered him to crawl away, for walk he could not, to Lucas's Coffee House. As soon as he got there, he claimed the compassion of the company ; and having informed them how ill he had been used, to interest them the more in his favour, falsely added, that Mr. Sheridan had had the audacity to declare that he was a better gentleman than any one who had been that night at the theatre. It is necessary to acquaint you, that Lucas's Coffee House is the place to which the Irish gentlemen usually resort to decide, in an honourable way, their quarrels. Whilst the combatants retire into the yard to acquire glory, the rest of the company

flock to the window, to see that no unfair advantages are taken, and to make bets on which of them falls first. And of these combats, I can assure you, there are not a few; the Hibernians being extremely captious; and very often ready to take offence where none is intended. You must 'speak by the card' amongst them, or a quarrel will ensue. They are possessed of many good qualifications, but this seems to be one of the foibles of the country.

"It is not to be wondered at, that persons of this cast should be easily excited to enter into any proposal which seemed likely to be productive of a riot. More especially, as most of the frequenters of Lucas's at that time had a natural antipathy to all learning except that kind of knowledge which enabled them to distinguish good claret from bad. They therefore one and all agreed to sally forth, to lay siege to Smock Alley Theatre, and sacrifice the presumptuous manager of it for having forfeited the name of gentleman, by appearing upon the stage. They likewise had another excitement, which was no less powerful with persons of their liberal way of thinking; and that was his having had the misfortune to have had a classical education, which he had greatly improved by application and intense study.

“Mr. Sheridan not supposing any persons could be found weak enough to abet such a cowardly being, imagined the affair was over at least for that night; and he had retired, to enjoy himself with some of his friends. The theatre was also shut up. The heroes, however, made a brave assault against it, and strove to force the doors. But finding them too strongly barricaded to hope for success, they retired.

“The next evening the ‘Fair Penitent’ was to be performed for the benefit of a public charity. Notwithstanding which, upon the appearance of Mr. Sheridan in the character of Horatio, *the Bucks*, as they termed themselves, immediately arose, and cried, ‘Out with the ladies and down with the house.’ It is impossible to describe to you the horrors of a riot at a Dublin theatre. The consternation and fright which it occasioned among the ladies, with whom the stage was exceedingly crowded, is beyond conception. Husbands and brothers were busily employed in taking care of their wives and sisters; and all was a scene of confusion.

“Mr. Sheridan was early advised by his friends to quit the house; but he would not hear of it. However, when the rioters leaped upon the stage,

and threatened his life, he found a retreat absolutely necessary for the preservation of it. Had he not prudently taken this step, those sons of Bacchus would certainly have put their threats into execution; for they broke open every door in the house, to find the offender, as they called him. These dastardly ruffians broke open the wardrobe, and as they could not find the manager, they revenged themselves upon the stuffing of Falstaff, which they stabbed in many places.

“In their researches they did me the honour of a visit. Two gentlemen of quality having joined the rioters out of curiosity, one of them Mr. Edward Hussey, now Lord Beaulieu, the other Mr. Mirvan, they came to the door of my dressing-room, and very politely told me, they were come to protect me from insult. But apprehending them, in my fright, to be leaders of the mob, and finding that the rioters were determined to leave no part of the theatre unsearched, instead of returning thanks for their politeness, as I should have done, I answered with some acrimony, ‘that my room was an improbable place to find the person they wanted, as I certainly should not undress, was there a gentleman in it.’

“Upon this Kelly advanced, and mistaking me, as

I imagined, for Mrs. Dyer, said I was the person who had occasioned all the disturbance. And I don't know whether I should have escaped further insult had I not, in a resolute tone of voice, ordered them to quit the room. To this at length they consented, upon being permitted to lift up the covering of my toilette, to see whether the manager was there. As soon as they were departed I hurried to my chair, and Mr. Hussey had the humanity to walk by the side of it, to see me safe home. And I was never more rejoiced in my life than when I found myself secure within the doors.

“The magistrates having reason to apprehend that greater mischief would ensue, if the theatre continued open, ordered it to be shut up till the benefits commenced. The affair, however, did not end here ; for the College boys, as they are usually termed, in order to revenge the cause of their fellow student, as well as to show their resentment at being deprived of their favourite amusement, took it into their heads to pay Mr. Fitzgerald, Mr. Kelly, and several other ringleaders of the rioters a morning visit, and obligingly invited them to partake of a breakfast at their college ; where they bestowed as much cold water upon them from their pumps, as served to keep their heads

perfectly cool to defend their cause against the manager, who had commenced the same day a prosecution against them."

IV.

The heroine now prepared to fly from these troubles and to return to London. Connected, however, with her stay in Dublin was a little incident which introduces those famous beauties, the Gunnings, who were later to perform on a more brilliant stage. They had "cut" their humbler companion, and the actress was at no pains to conceal her resentment against the old friends who had neglected her.

"After the account I gave you in my last, can you wonder, madam, at my being less pleased with the profession I was engaged in, than I was when youth and inexperience presented to my view only the pleasing side of it; or that I grew tired of a country where I was subject to such continual alarms?

"I am now about to mention an incident in my life, which relates to persons who have made a very conspicuous figure in the great world. As I was returning one day from rehearsal, at the bottom of Britain Street, I heard the voice of distress. Yielding to an impulse of humanity, I

overleaped the bounds of good breeding, and entered the house from which it proceeded. When I had done this, led by an irresistible attraction, I entered without ceremony the parlour, the door of which appeared to be guarded by persons not at all suited to those within. I here found a woman of a most elegant figure, surrounded by four beautiful girls, and a sweet boy of about three years of age. After making the necessary apologies for my abrupt intrusion, I informed the lady, that as the lamentations of her little family had reached my ears as I passed by, I had taken the liberty of a neighbour to inquire if I could render her any service.

“Mrs. Gunning, for that was the lady’s name, arose immediately from her seat, and calling me by my name, thanked me for the offer of my assistance, complimenting me at the same time upon possessing such humane sensations. She then informed me, that having lived beyond their income, her husband had been obliged to retire into the country, to avoid the disagreeable consequences that must ensue. That she had been in hopes that her brother, Lord Mayo, listening to the dictates of fraternal affection, would not suffer a sister and her family to be reduced to distress; but that his lordship remained inflexible to her

repeated solicitations. The ill-looking men, I now found, had entered the house by virtue of an execution, and were preparing to turn her and her children out of doors.

“Upon this, Mrs. Gunning and myself went upstairs to consult what was best to be done in so disagreeable a predicament. We there determined that I should return home, and send my manservant, who was to wait under the window of the drawing room in the evening, and bring to my house everything that could be thrown to him. It was further agreed, that as my mother and I had more room than we could conveniently occupy, the children and their servant should remain with us, whilst she went to her husband to assist him in settling his affairs. The whole of our plan being carried into execution, Miss Burke, Mrs. Gunning’s sister, a lady of exemplary piety, who had passed her probation in the community of Channel Row, sent shortly after for the two youngest girls, and the two eldest were permitted, to my great pleasure, to remain at our house. As the beauty of these ladies has since made so much noise in the world, and has been so recently imprinted on the memory of every rank, it will be unnecessary here to give a description of them. I

shall, therefore, only observe, that the eldest, Maria, the late Countess of Coventry, was all life and spirits; and that Miss Betty, the younger, now Duchess of Argyll, &c. &c., with a longer train of noble titles than perhaps ever woman enjoyed before her, was more reserved and solid.

“Here I must beg your permission to relate to you a singular anecdote concerning the ladies who have given rise to the foregoing reflection, and myself, which I have lately recollected. I say, *beg your permission*; because, whilst the incident seems to carry with it the appearance of great *credulity* in me, the relation of it here will look as if I expected to find some degree of the same propensity in you.

“But as the fact really happened, and I can vouch for the truth of it, I will give you the circumstances of it, just as they arose, without endeavouring to account for a preference, the verity of which has since been confirmed with the most extraordinary punctuality. Her Grace of Argyll, who was one of the *trio*, will, I doubt not, readily recollect the adventure.*

* The point of this sarcastic reminder will be evident when it is remembered that “her Grace of Argyll” was living when these memoirs were published.

"The eldest Miss Gunning, conscious of her charms, even at that early period of her life, and wishing to know whether they would procure her that elevation which her youthful vanity taught her to hope for, prevailed upon me to accompany her and her sister Betsy, to a sybil, alias a female fortune-teller, who from some lucky discoveries she had made (probably from her having privately acquired a knowledge of the parties) was considered as an oracle throughout the whole city of Dublin. So great was the fame she had acquired by her reputed skill in prognostication, that she was dubbed with the pre-eminent title of *Madam Fortune*, as if she was the blind directress of events herself, or her immediate representative.

"That we might avoid, as much as possible, giving the prophetess any clue by which to judge of our real situation in life, we all three habited ourselves in mean attire, and instead of going in the carriage, *walked* to her house. To add to the deception, I put on a wedding-ring, which I had borrowed of a friend for that purpose.

"Upon Miss Molly's being ushered into her presence, she, without any hesitation, told her, that she would be *titled* (so she expressed herself) *but far from happy*. When Miss Betsy appeared, she

declared that she would be *great to a degree*, and that she would be happy in the connections which conduced to that greatness; but from a want of health (which alone can give value either to riches or grandeur), she would find a considerable abatement to that happiness.—When your humble servant presented herself, she said I might take off the ring I wore, as I never was, nor ever would *be married*, unless I played the fool in my old age. To this she added, that opulence would court me, and flattery follow me; notwithstanding which, through my own folly, I should be brought to indigence.

“I will not, as I said before, pretend to account for this extraordinary instance of anticipating future events; but a retrospection of the five preceding volumes of my life will prove, that the old sybil happened to be right in her predictions of the future fate of my two visitants, as well as myself. But so little heeded by me were the admonitions they ought to have conveyed, that I thoughtlessly ran on the rock I was cautioned to beware of, and unhappily split upon it. . . .

“During the winter ‘Romeo and Juliet’ being bespoke by some persons of quality, Lady Coventry (late Miss Maria Gunning), with some

other ladies of the first distinction, were in the stage-box. I have already mentioned my intimacy with this beautiful woman, when she was a girl, and the circumstances which occasioned it. But I had not seen her since that time, except a few days before her marriage, when she did me the favour to call upon me, on a little pecuniary business.

“In the scene, where Juliet drinks the supposed poison, just as I was got to the most interesting part of that soliloquy, it was interrupted by a loud laugh, which issued from the box where her Ladyship sat. The silent attention in which the rest of the audience were enrapt made such a circumstance the more striking. It had so great an effect upon me, that, being wholly disconcerted, and unable to proceed, I was obliged to request leave to retire till I could collect myself. The audience were offended at the interruption this levity had occasioned, and insisted upon the ladies quitting the box, which they accordingly did.

“A gentleman in the side-boxes reproached Lady Coventry with her rudeness and ingratitude. Upon which she was pleased to say, she could not bear me since she had seen Mrs. Cibber. As this was no other than my brother, Captain O’Hara, he

aloud made her Ladyship a retort, but not the *retort courteous*. This added to mortify her vanity, and hastened her departure. The late Lord Eglington, one of the politest men of his time, who was of the stage-box party, came into the green-room to make an apology. And this he did, by assuring me that no offence was meant to me; the laugh that Lady Coventry had broke out into being involuntary, and excited by her twirling an orange upon her finger, and some ridiculous thing that was said upon the occasion. I admitted the excuse, and finished my part with as much approbation as ever.

“The next morning my brother came, and informed me of what her Ladyship had foolishly uttered. Upon which I rang for the house steward, and delivering him the note she had given me, when Miss Gunning, for the money she had borrowed of me a few days before her nuptials, I ordered him to go with it to Lord Coventry’s for payment.

“Quince waited till her Ladyship came in from riding; when presenting the note to her, she returned it, saying, ‘What! is it Mrs. Bellamy the *actress*?’ To which my domestic, who daily saw me treated in a different manner by ladies

greatly her superiors, answered that it was, and that I expected the money to be paid. Upon which, turning upon her heel, her Ladyship said, 'If she is impertinent, I will have her hissed off the stage!' The man, unaccustomed to such treatment, replied, 'That continuing on the stage was a matter of indifference to his mistress; but if she chose to perform, it was not in her Ladyship's power to prevent it.' Having said this, he left the house, as he saw there was no probability of succeeding in his errand. He, however, had not got far, before a servant followed, and informed him that the money should be sent shortly.

"But from that hour I never heard anything more of or from her Ladyship concerning the money. Indeed, I had not the least expectation of ever getting it again when I gave it her, nor should I have taken the note from her, had she not forced it upon me. Such a trifle, at that period, was of very little consequence to me. And as resentment never made me any long visits, finding my heart an unfit receptacle, I placed it to account with former favours, and thought no more about it. I was much displeased with myself at having been hurt at a folly, of which her Ladyship had given so many instances. Had I

time and inclination, I have room here to add a supplement to those remarks on the scarcity of gratitude, which Doctor Francis's *grateful* conduct excited. I shall, however, only refer you to them, and leave you to make the application. And to show how very different the lady's sentiments had formerly been, I send you a copy of a letter I once received from her, and which bears this singular address: 'To Miss Bellamy in England.' As it is much defaced by time,* there are several breaks in it, but it is given in its present state, and at the same time, *verbatim et literatim*.

“‘I Rec^d my Dearest Miss Bellamy Letter at Last: after her long silence, indeed I was very Jealous with you, but you make me amen's in Letting me hear from you now, it gives me great Joy & all our faimely to hear that y^r D^r mama and your Dearest self are in perfict Health to be sure all y^r Relations where fighting to see which of them should have you first and Longest with y^m. I hope you are a most tird of england, and that we shall soon have your sweet company in Ireland, where you will be heartily welcome, it gives me vast pleasure to hear you haves thoughts of coming over, my Lady — — — To be sure I dont wonder

* The original is in the hands of the publisher.

at it, for you know her heart and soul was rapit up in his, as to hows bing the next heir I believe it will be how my Lord pleases, he is in ye Country & my Lady is with us she cant go to her own house I belive she will go strait to england to Miss Bour, I was very unfortunate to be in the country when our Vaux Hall was, if I was in Town I sho'd be thear & I believe I should be much more delighted than at a publicker diversion, I am quit alterd since I saw you, there is nothing I love so much as solitude ; I dont believe it was Mr, knox you read of at Bath, fot he is hear and pray write me word when you saw or heard from Mr. Crump. — is out Town this tew months past every — in the Country, Dublin is y^e stupites place — in the world I hope ye winter will be more — tho I see no great Liklihood of it, for I believe Shredian can get know body to play with him is doing all he can to get frinds for him sef to be sure you have bread he is marrd for sirtain to Miss Chamberlan a sweet pare,

“ Papa & mama & Miss Betty & Miss Kittys sincer love and comp^{ts} to yⁿ & y^r mama y^r Littel Husband sends you ten Thousand kisses he whisses he had you hear to give y^m to you he says they wo^d be swe — Lipes than on paper without

making —— Comp^{ts} he shakes me so I cant write
— Miss Bellamy will excuse this—

“ ‘I must bid a due & shall
only say I am my D^r your
ever affec^{nat}.

“ ‘Dublin August 31.

“ ‘M. GUNNING.

“ ‘Mrs Judy begs leave to give her Comp^{ts} to you,
& is rejoyes’d to hear you are well, she is in a very
bad state of health.’ ”

Miss Wynne also records a special instance of their ungraciousness to an old Dublin friend. All accounts indeed show that the beauties were rather unamiable. Boswell’s amusing scene at Inverary Castle with the Duchess of Argyll—who exhibited a resentment that was almost a violation of the duties of hospitality—is familiar to every reader. “The lady of quality” writes:—

“ Mrs. Gunning consulted Sheridan as to what she should do with her two beautiful but penniless daughters. He recommended that they should be presented at the Castle; here a great difficulty occurred: by what possible means were they to procure court dresses? This Sheridan obviated: he was at that time manager of the Dublin Theatre, and offered them a loan of the

stage dresses of Lady Macbeth and Juliet. In these they appeared most lovely; and Sheridan, after having attended the toilet, claimed a salute from each as his reward. Very soon after this a most diabolical scheme was formed by some unprincipled young men. They invited Mrs. Gunning and her two daughters to dinner, and infused strong narcotics in the wine, intending to take advantage of the intoxication which must ensue to carry off the two young women. Fortunately, Sheridan discovered their base designs, and arrived just in time to rescue the ladies. He lived to see one of these girls Duchess of Argyle, and the other Countess of Coventry; and, it is melancholy to add, lived to see his application for admission to their parties rejected.

“Lady Coventry enjoyed one very singular triumph. Having one day casually mentioned to the king, that she could not walk in the Mall because the crowd who came to gaze at her pressed round her in a way that was quite alarming, his Majesty gallantly exclaimed that the finest woman in England should not be prevented from gracing the Mall. He desired that whenever she wished to walk she would send notice to the captain upon guard, and at the

same time ordered that she should be attended by a sergeant's guard. She walked several times with this train: of course the crowd increased; but they were prevented from pressing upon her, and her vanity, which was excessive, must have received the highest gratification in this singular distinction."*

But Mrs. Piozzi tells a more curious story. "A Mr. Head," she says, "whose real name was Plunkett, a low Irish parasite, dependent on Mr. Thrall primarily, and I suppose, secondarily on Mr. Murphy, was employed by them in various schemes of pleasure, as you men call profligacy: and on this occasion was deputed to amuse them by personating some *lord*, whom his patrons had promised to introduce to the beautiful Miss Gunnings when they first came over with intent to make their fortunes. He was received accordingly, and the girls played off their best airs, and cast kind looks on his introducers

* These stories of the Gunnings might be amply confirmed from contemporary accounts. Horace Walpole states that they borrowed court dresses from Peg Woffington, to attend a drawing-room at the Castle, Dublin, and writes thus of them in 1751: "There are two Irish girls of no fortune, who are declared the handsomest women alive. I think their being two so handsome, and both such perfect figures, is their chief excellence, for, singly, I have seen much handsomer figures than either: however, they can't walk in the park, or go to Vauxhall, but such mobs follow them that they are therefore driven away."

from time to time: till the fellow wearied, as Johnson says, and disgusted with his ill-acted character, burst out on a sudden as they sate at tea and cried, "Catamaran! young gentlemen with two shoes and never a heel: when will you have done with silly jokes now? Leddies;" turning to the future peeresses, "never mind these merry boys; but if you really can afford to pay for some incomparable silk stockings, or true India handkerchiefs, *here they are now:*" rummaging his smuggler's pocket; but the girls jumped up and turned them all three into the street, where Thrale and Murphy cursed their senseless assistant, and called him *Head*, like *lucus a non lucendo*, because they swore he had none. The Duchess (of Hamilton), however, never did forgive this impudent frolic; Lady Coventry, more prudently, pretended to forget it."

V.

Returned to London, the heroine was presently surrounded by admirers who besieged her with their addresses—Mr. Metham, Count Haslang, one of the foreign ambassadors, Mr. Calcraft, Mr. West Digges (a well-known actor of the day, who was

in some cloudy way connected with the Delawarr family), and even the Right Hon. Mr. Fox, afterwards Lord Holland. The lady it must be said, was not very cruel to this varied list of worshippers, and chronicles her various embarrassments with the naïveté of a persecuted maid. It is, however, a curious illustration of the tone of the times that she should have counted among her patronesses many ladies of rank and *ton*, though the warm interest that was taken in her might be accounted for by a certain simplicity of nature that was observed in her, combined with a sort of rustic piety that appeared to be genuine. This simplicity is seen in her singular account of an engagement she entered into with the most persevering of these suitors, the eminent contractor, Mr. Calcraft, who appears to have been a singularly odious character. She relates how this gentleman despatched an emissary of his own with his proposals. "This gentlemen went on to inform me, that Mr. Calcraft, in whose praise he launched out, had it not in his power to marry me immediately, as his dependence on Mr. Fox prevented him from doing so. But that the paper he held in his hand was the copy of a contract of marriage, in which Mr. Calcraft had engaged, under

the forfeiture of fifty thousand pounds, to make me his wife, within the term of six or seven years; in which time, from every appearance, there was no doubt of his acquiring such an independency as would enable him to avow his situation. But at present he could not suffer the ceremony to be performed, as his patron had enjoined him, upon pain of his displeasure and the loss of his support, not to enter into a serious engagement with a woman in public life. Therefore, though he loved me to distraction, he had too great a regard to his honour, which he had pledged to his patron, to purchase even me at the expence of it. As things were in such a situation, he had thought of this method as the only one by which he could secure *me*, and keep his own word.

“I heard, with patience, Mr. Gansel repeat his visitor’s reasons for his present conduct: but he had no sooner done so than I expressed, in the strongest terms, my dissatisfaction to the latter, at his taking the liberty of troubling either Mr. Gansel or myself upon the subject. I then assured him, that I was firmly resolved never to form any connection whatsoever, and desired he would let me hear no more of his addresses. I was now about to leave the room, when

Mr. Calcraft, who was visibly affected at my determination, stepped between me and the door, and endeavoured to prevent me from going.

“Offended at this freedom, passion got the better of good manners, and, I am almost ashamed even at this distant period to indite it, I struck him. The thought of having demeaned myself so much, operated so forcibly on my mind, that I burst into tears; and I felt myself more confounded at having given the blow, than Zanga did at receiving one. Mr. Calcraft vented his feelings in sighs and groans; and the old gentleman was almost distracted.”

Her admirer however long persevered, and, at last, the lady consented. “The contract was immediately executed; and, except the omission of the ceremony, our nuptials were solemnized to the satisfaction of all parties, *but my poor self*. The old gentleman was as happy and as proud of his having succeeded in the negociation, as if he had married a darling daughter to an hereditary prince. As for myself, I still, like the patriarch’s dove, longed to return to the home where all my happiness had so long been deposited; and had I known the *real* situation of the man that had offended me, instead of waiting for

his submission, I should myself have produced the olive branch, and have sued for peace. When we returned to town, the contract was left with Mr. Gansel, as a place of the greatest security, and as being lodged in the hands of one of my most zealous friends."

After suffering for some time from this man's illtreatment, she naïvely professed to be amazed at the discovery that he had all this time been secretly married, and that her own extraordinary engagement became thus invalidated. Harassed with anxieties, she was seized with a dangerous illness, and reduced to the point of death. That a contract of the kind had been entered into, there can be no doubt, as the incident presently became one of the scandals of the time. She printed an appeal to the public, with a copy of the engagement, which Mr. Calcraft succeeded in suppressing at the time, though it appeared later.

VI.

The eccentric course of her adventures was diversified with little incidents that curiously illustrate the manners of the day and the customs of the stage. She thus tells the story of the "Chicken Gloves."

“I must here entertain you with an humorous instance of my vanity’s being humbled; and which, though it may extort a smile from you, had like to have cost your humble servant very dear.

“Having received some ridiculous compliments upon the beauty of my hand, and my vanity not being a little augmented thereby, I determined to try every art in my power to render it more conspicuously white, and more worthy of the praises that had been bestowed upon it. Accordingly, in order to attain this grand point, which I then thought of the utmost consequence, I sent to Warren’s, the perfumer, *for a pair of chicken gloves*.

“When I had obtained these wonder-working coverings, I drew them on as I went to rest; and with some difficulty prevailed on Clifford to fasten my hands to the bed’s head, to accelerate the wished-for effect. Thus manacled, and pleasing myself with the expectation of finding my project succeed, I fell asleep. But, O dire to tell! I had not become the vassal of Morpheus above two hours, when I awoke, and found that I had totally lost the use of my right hand.

“Alarmed by the accident, I hastily called my maid, who lay in an adjacent room, to come and

unshackle me ; and finding, when my arms were at liberty, that my apprehensions were too true, I ordered her to send immediately for one of the faculty. In about half an hour, a gentleman came ; and upon being informed of the terrible calamity that had befallen me, and the dreadful disappointment I had experienced, he, laughing, told me, that he would take such methods as should effectually cure my white hand. And this he executed according to the letter of his promise : for he applied to my arm a mustard blister, which extended from my shoulder to my finger's end. An application that was not only attended with excruciating pain, but was productive of great mortification ; for both the public and myself were debarred from the pleasure of viewing the beauty I so much prided myself in for a long time, as I was obliged to wear gloves during the remainder of the winter."

Again ; the audiences of the time were more independent than they are at present and took a more direct share in the business of the stage. Our heroine had recently broken her arm—

"Mr. Rich," she says, "was very pressing for me to come to town. At length I found myself so well recovered as to attend the duties of the

theatre. The first character I made my appearance in was that of Rutland, in the 'Earl of Essex.' When I came to the mad scene, I threw myself on the floor as usual; and, in order to prevent my late fractured arm from receiving any injury from the fall, I fell on my right side instead of my left. Mrs. Clive, who was in the boxes, observing this, her good-nature got the better of her recollection, and she cried out, 'O, she has broken her other arm!' The audience took the alarm, and, still honouring me with their favour, called out, with a kind concern, for the curtain to be dropped. But finding, by my agility in rising, that I had not hurt myself, they suffered me to proceed."

Of all the queens of the stage, perhaps, there is no such dramatic figure as that of Mrs. Woffington. Her good-nature, her boldness, wit, dramatic talents, and beauty, combine to make her a most interesting character, and her story, a contribution to the romance of the stage. In Wilkinson's *Recollections* she figures pleasantly, but the simple and graceful tribute paid to her by one of her own profession has a deeper significance than pages of lengthy panegyric.

"To her honour be it ever remembered," says the Prompter of the Dublin Theatre, "that whilst thus

in the zenith of her glory, courted and caressed by all ranks and degrees, it made no alteration in her behaviour; *she remained the same gay, affable, obliging, good-natured Woffington to every one around her.* She had none of those occasional illnesses which I have sometimes seen assumed by capital performers, to the great vexation and loss of the manager, and disappointment of the public: she always acted four times each week.

“Not the lowest performer in the theatre did she refuse playing for; out of twenty-six benefits, she acted in twenty-four, and one of the other two was for Mrs. Lee, who chose to treat the town with an exhibition of her own Juliet. Such traits of character must endear the memory of Mrs. Woffington to every lover of the drama.”*

But such a heroine, flattered, courted and perhaps a little spoiled, would naturally feel intolerant of a rival. She could put on scornful moods, when she thought a contemptible mimic had dared to make free with her peculiarities, and she was not likely to be indulgent to a beautiful woman like Bellamy who disputed the throne with her.

* *Hitchcock*, v. ii. 223. For a fuller account of Woffington the editor may be allowed to refer to his ‘Life of Garrick,’ which, with the sketches found in Tate Wilkinson’s *Recollections* given further on, furnish a picture of the famous Mrs. Woffington.

The former regarded her with the bitterest hostility, and the two ladies had an open quarrel which excited the amusement of the town, and set the pens of the wits at work. The story of their jealousies is most amusing.

“Mr. Rich had been advised to revive Lee’s tragedy of ‘Alexander,’ as the character of that hero would suit the powers and show the person of Barry to singular advantage. The parts of the rival queens he judged would be likewise well filled by Mrs. Woffington and myself. The animosity this lady had long borne me had not experienced any decrease. On the contrary, my late additional finery in my jewels, &c., had augmented it to something very near hatred. I had during the summer given Madam Montete, wife of the hair-dresser of the time, who was going to Paris, a commission to bring me from thence two tragedy dresses, the most elegant she could purchase. I have already observed, that the proprietor allowed me a certain sum to find my own habiliments.

“My *chargée d’affaire* opened her credentials at Madam Bonfoy’s, principal *marchand du mode* in that metropolis. I had requested this lady to consult Brilliant, who would consult Du Menil. She was likewise to take the joint opinion of all the

people of taste there, upon an affair of such momentous consequence. The revival of 'Alexander' furnished me with an opportunity of showing all my elegance in the character of the Persian Princess.

"My royal robes in which I had represented the Empress Fulvia, in Doctor Francis's 'Constantine,' to the great loss of the public, had not been seen by them. They were showy and proper for the character. But in these *robes de cours*, taste and elegance were never so happily blended. Particularly in one of them, the ground of which was a deep yellow. Mr. Rich had purchased a suit of her Royal Highness's, the Princess Dowager of Wales, for Mrs. Woffington to appear in Roxana. It was not in the least soiled, and looked very beautiful by day-light; but, being a straw-colour, it seemed to be a dirty white by candle-light; especially when my splendid yellow was by it. To this yellow dress I had added a purple robe; and a mixture so happy made it appear, if possible, to greater advantage.

"Thus accoutred in all my magnificence, I made my *entrée* into the green-room as the Persian Princess. But how shall I describe the feelings of my inveterate rival! The sight of my pompous

attire created more real envy in the heart of the actress than it was possible the real Roxana could feel for the loss of the Macedonian hero. As soon as she saw me, almost bursting with rage, she drew herself up, and thus, with a haughty air, addressed me : ‘I desire, madam, you will never more, upon any account, wear those clothes in the piece we perform to night.’

“ You are too well acquainted with my disposition, and so, I dare say, are my readers by this time, to suppose this envious lady took the proper way to have her request granted. I replied, ‘I know not, madam, by what right you take upon you to dictate to me what I shall wear. And I assure you, madam, you must ask it in a very different manner before you obtain my compliance.’ She now found it necessary to solicit in a softer strain ; and I readily gave my assent. The piece consequently went through without any more murmuring on her part, whatever might be her sensations.

“ However, the next night I sported my other suit, which was much more splendid than the former. This rekindled Mrs. Woffington’s rage, so that it nearly bordered on madness. When—oh ! dire to tell !—she drove me off the carpet, and gave me the *coup de grâce* almost behind the scenes.

The audience, who I believe preferred hearing my last dying speech to seeing her beauty and fine attitude, could not avoid perceiving her violence, and testified their displeasure at it.

“Though I despise revenge, I do not dislike retaliation. I therefore put on my yellow and purple once more. As soon as I appeared in the green-room, her fury could not be kept within bounds, notwithstanding one of the *corps diplomatique* was then paying homage to her beauty, and for the moment made her imagine she had the power of control equal to a real queen. She imperiously questioned me, how I dared to dress again in the manner she had so strictly prohibited? The only return I made to this insolent interrogation was by a smile of contempt. It was not long before I had my plenipo likewise, the never-failing Comte de Haslang, to whom I told the reason of my changing my attire, which was meant *par oblique* to her. Upon hearing which, she immediately sent for Mr. Rich; but that gentleman prudently declined attending her summons.

“Being now ready to burst with the contending passions which agitated her bosom, she told me it was well for me that I had a *minister* to supply my extravagance with jewels and such paraphernalia.

Struck with so unmerited and cruel a reproach, my asperity became more predominant than my good-nature, and I replied, I was sorry that even half the town could not furnish a supply equal to the minister she so illiberally hinted at. Finding I had got myself into a disagreeable predicament, and recollecting the well-known distich, that

‘He who fights, and runs away,
May live to fight another day;’

I made as quick an exit as possible, notwithstanding I wore the regalia of a queen. But I was obliged in some measure to the Comte for my safety, as his Excellency covered my retreat, and stopped my enraged rival’s pursuit; I should otherwise have stood a chance of appearing in the next scene with black eyes, instead of the blue ones which nature had given me.

“The next season Mr. Foote profited by this behaviour of Mrs. Woffington, and produced a little piece, which he entitled, ‘The Green-room Squabble; or, a Battle Royal between the Queen of Babylon and the Daughter of Darius.’ It may be supposed that after so public a rupture we never spoke. This taciturnity continued, till being upon her death-bed, some years after, she requested to see me. She then informed me, that she had once

done me an intentional injury, by prevailing upon one of her lovers to show Mr. Fox a letter of mine which had accidentally fallen into her hands, and the contents of which would admit of a different interpretation from what it was designed to convey. Her malicious intention had not, however, the desired effect, as that gentleman and myself were not upon the terms she suspected, or at least wished to have thought. I own I could not refrain from being much surprised at the wickedness and meanness of the intended injury. And though my humanity prompted me to forgive an offence which seemed to lie so heavy on her mind, I left the lady as soon as possible to reflect upon the illiberality of such a proceeding."

Of such fashion was her strange life—a mixture of pleasure, adventure, extravagance and hardship. But her fickleness had alienated many friends and patrons, and her love of amusement, pleasure, and recklessness made her neglect the stage. Then humiliations of all kinds set in; she could hardly procure an engagement, and the once peerless heroine was contemptuously offered six pounds a week by Mr. Colman!

The first reminder of decay was her reception in Dublin.

VII.

It was the season of 1760 when the exciting contest between Barry and Woodward on one side, and Mossop on the other, was raging, and the great world of fashion was divided into two parties, each supporting a rival house, just as in the great struggle of the Opera Houses in the days of Mr. Lumley. Mr. Mossop, whose own story is of a tragic cast, hoping to turn the balance by bringing over the once attractive Bellamy, agreed to pay her the sum of a thousand pounds, which was utterly disproportioned to the value of her service. "He relied on the old tradition of some thirteen years before, when," says Wilkinson, "she was esteemed a first actress, was looked at as a charming elegant young woman, and was the universal toast in Ireland. "She candidly owns that there was, at first, disappointment and surprise at the change in her appearance, but hints that this impression was removed on the following day by repose. She admits, too, that she "was by no means so well received as she had formerly been." But this she fancied was owing to her formerly having had no competitor.

"My arrival having been hourly expected, curio-

sity had induced many of the students of the college to watch for my coming. I accordingly found the door of the house, at which I was to alight, crowded with them, in expectation of beholding a wonder. For it could not enter into the imagination of those young gentlemen, that any less than a perfect beauty had been so general a topic of conversation, and the subject of so many poetical compliments from their predecessors.

“One of my female domestics was tolerably handsome; she, therefore, at first caught their eyes; but, as she had not the appearance of elegance which distinguishes the gentlewoman, the mistake was but momentary. At length I stepped out of the coach. The long expected phenomenon now made her appearance. But oh, how different a figure from what their imagination had depicted! Fashion to yourself the idea of a little dirty creature bent nearly double, enfeebled by fatigue, her countenance tinged with jaundice, and in every respect the reverse of a person who could make the least pretensions to beauty. Such was I, when I presented myself to the sight of the gazing crowd. And so great and natural was their surprise and disappointment, that they immediately

vanished, and left me to crawl into the house without admiration or molestation.

“I spent the evening at the Parliament House, where many of the seniors of the College, as well as the Provost, were present. Others likewise came to see the fright which had excited the disgust of the curious in the morning. Nothing is so favourable to an object as exaggerated dispraise. For, with only the assistance of ablution, and in the most simple dress (simplicity in my dress being, as I have already observed, my constant adoption, except when finery was absolutely needful; and I always scorned to owe any addition to art, which I disliked as much in the adornment of the person as of the mind), I made a more favourable impression upon the company than could have been expected.”

But there was an observant performer playing in Dublin, who gives a truer account of what took place. He sketches the poor decayed creature, with a not unkind bluntness, but the contrast to her complacent account is very striking. “Mossop, as manager,” writes Tate Wilkinson, “made his first appearance in *Pierre*, in ‘*Venice Preserved*,’ *Belvedere*, Mrs. Bellamy, being the first night of her performing. Expectation was so great that the

house filled, as fast as the people could thrust in with or without paying. On speaking her first line behind the scene,—

“Lead me, ye virgins, lead me to that kind voice,”

it struck the ears of the audience as uncouth and unmusical; yet she was received, as was prepared and determined by all who were her or Mr. Mossop’s friends, and the public at large, with repeated plaudits on her entrée. But the roses were fled! the young, the once lovely Bellamy was turned haggard! and her eyes, that used to charm all hearts, appeared sunk, large, hollow, and ghastly. O Time! Time! thy glass should be often consulted! for before the first short scene had elapsed, disappointment, chagrin, and pity sat on every eye and countenance.

“By the end of the third act, they were all (like Bobadil) planet-struck; the other two acts hobbled through. Mossop was cut to the heart, and never played Pierre (one of his best parts) so indifferently as on that night. The curtain dropped, and poor Bellamy never after drew a single house there. She left Dublin without a single friend to regret her loss. What a change from the days of her youth! and as an actress of note, her name

never more ranked in any theatre, nor did she ever again rise in public estimation."

Still the poor foolish lady launched out into fresh extravagance—though she had left a load of debt behind her in London. Here is a specimen of what she exposed herself to. "My bill," she says, "for wine and other articles, had of Mr. Crump, amounted to £400.

"Though I received fifty guineas a week, yet through the extravagance of my servants, and my own thoughtlessness, I had not a guinea beforehand. But, to my great surprise, I heard that Mr. Crump had failed: and Coates had taken possession of his effects, books, &c.

"‘Coriolanus,’ was bespoke; and Mr. Mossop had the agreeable prospect of a subscription for six plays, which would enable him to pay the performers; for not one of them was regularly paid but myself, though by what means he expended his money I could not imagine. As I went one day as usual to the rehearsal, I observed a mean-looking fellow run by the side of my chair. I called, in my way, upon a lady. Still the same man was my attendant. Having no suspicion of any danger from him, I attributed it to the beauty of my sedan; which, indeed, attracted every eye.

“ I had some company at dinner, which made it rather later than usual when I set out for the theatre. As my chairmen entered Damask Street, the man who had followed me in the morning knocked at the front window of my chair, and, when I had let it down showed me a bit of paper. Upon my inquiring what it was, he told me it was a writ for the two hundred pounds I owed Coates, as successor to Crump’s affairs, and insisted that I should go with him. I told him he should have the money, if he would go to the theatre, and that I would likewise make him a handsome present for the permission. But this he would not consent to do ; as, he said, he had particular orders from the plaintiff to the contrary.

“ This being the case, I made a virtue of necessity, and went with him to a house in Skinner Row. When I got there, I sent for Coates, but he was not to be found. The officer now candidly told me, that the intention of taking me in the evening was to prevent my appearing at the theatre that night. He had been particularly warned, he said, not to arrest me in the morning, as they were well assured I should have paid the debt, and by that means have disappointed their purpose. It was two o’clock in the morning before

the plaintiff could be met with, and as he had given orders that the affair should only be settled by himself, I was obliged to wait with patience his coming. Mrs. Molloy and Miss Ly'll visited me in my durance ; and I believe the officer's house was never so graced before.

"Mrs. Usher had been obliged to read my part. As soon as the play was over, Mr. Mossop came to me. And I was vastly apprehensive that he would have caned Coates. This was what the man seemed to wish, for such a vulgar impertinent I never heard before. He had the impudence to tell us, that he knew he should easily have got the money, but he wished to prevent my playing that night. 'Everything,' continued he, 'is fair, where interests clash.'

"When Mr. Digges (a new lover) found me in this situation, he was like a distracted man. His first business was to give a most severe chastisement to Coates ; which, together with some other embarrassments in his private affairs, obliged him to leave Dublin."

Such was a type of the life that was now before her. With the decay of her charms, came fresh debt and embarrassment : arrests in the open street—with protection, then secured by "being made

housekeeper to Count Haslang," whose suite as belonging to an ambassador enjoyed immunity from law process. Later came callousness,—the result of such struggles,—the usual shifts and battles with creditors, the pawning or sale of jewels and dresses—and, at last, final residence within the Rules.

"As soon as Mr. Fox, and some other guests, who had dined with me, were departed, I prepared to go to his Excellency's to cards; but, as I passed through Jermyn Street, I was overtaken by the wretch's brother, who, almost breathless with running after me, informed me that a man, who came up at the same time, had an action against me, at his sister's suit. The shock had such an effect upon me, that I dropped down speechless in the street. Two such insults, so quickly succeeding each other, were not to be supported. Had the latter come singly, I could have borne it with Roman fortitude; but, united, they were too severe a trial.

"Had I been able to preserve my reason upon this occasion, and been acquainted with the laws, I might have preserved my liberty, at least for that night; for it seems the fellows who arrested me had, in their great hurry, forgot the warrant;

without which, I find, the caption is not valid ; but, during my imbecility, one of them ran for it.

“ I was taken, during this state of insensibility, to the officer’s house in Stanhope Street, Clare Market ; which happened to be the same where my brother, Captain O’Hara, was confined. It was so long before I came to myself, that the surgeon, who was sent for to bleed me, was apprehensive for my life.

“ The mistress of the house had some feeling ; and seeing me dressed above the common line, though plain, and having besides conceived some partiality for me, not only on account of my being an actress, but as sister to her favourite captain, who had so often been her lodger, she paid me more attention than persons generally meet with in such places. She sent for my maid, and kindly prevented all noise and confusion in the house for five days, during which I remained in a state of silent insanity. My maid, to return the obligations she thought I laid under to all those who sent to inquire after me, took the servants that brought the messages, which were not a few, to the bar, and treated them with what they would have ; and this made no inconsiderable addition to my expenses.

“ The sixth morning of my residence in this place,

the woman of the house came up to me, and told me that the writ was returnable the next day, and if I did not eat and drink, and get a *habeas corpus*, I should be carried a corpse to Newgate. The name of that dreadful place made me tremble; but, at the same time, it roused me as if I had been electrified. I immediately recovered from my stupidity, and asked her what was to be done. She informed me that it would be necessary for me to employ an attorney to procure a *habeas* for me, and also to send and engage a lodging within the rules of the King's Bench. She added that her son, who was an attorney, was below, and would be glad to serve me. She concluded by telling me that persons in the law never advanced any money for their clients; though indeed they did not expect to have their bills settled immediately, especially where it was safe, as it must be with a lady who had credit enough to *owe* one person twelve hundred pounds. I startled at the mention of so large a sum, and desired her to explain herself; which she did by telling me that was the debt for which the execution was levied against me.

“What was now to be done I scarcely knew. I had but a few guineas about me.

“I now began to consider whom I could send to upon this emergency. I had known Mrs. Stacie, when her husband kept an inn at Stilton. They had since removed to the Bedford Arms in Covent Garden. Having conceived a very strong attachment for her, from frequently calling at their house at Stilton, I had promised to stand sponsor to the child she was pregnant with, upon my return from the north. I had not only performed this promise, but had been called upon to appear upon the same occasion to two others.

“Upon the strength of this acquaintance, I immediately applied to her for twelve guineas. I thought that sum, with what I had, would be sufficient to pay the whole of my expenses here ; but, to my inconceivable surprise, they amounted to as much again ; so that I paid very handsomely for the civility the mistress of the house had shown me in keeping it quiet.

“Mrs. Stacie came immediately on my sending to her, and could not refrain from tears at seeing me in such an unexpected situation. Her husband had given her a bill for twenty pounds, which she let me have ; and upon hearing that I had obstinately refused all food, when she returned, she sent me a supper of all the niceties their house afforded.

“In return for the civility the mistress of the house had shown me, I asked her to partake of the supper Mrs. Stacie sent me. She cheerfully accepted my invitation. During our meal, she enumerated all the persons of quality who had occasionally been her visitors. After supper, she asked if she should entertain me with a song; for she was reckoned, she said, to have a very fine voice. The oddity of her manner, as she made the proposal, joined to her masculine figure, had such an effect upon my imagination, that I instantly burst into a violent fit of laughter. The approbation we expressed gave her such sensible pleasure, that she concluded with telling me she was sure, as I was fond of music, I *must* be pleased with her voice.

“The next morning Mr. Thomas, then Lord Mansfield’s clerk, came himself with the tipstaff, to conduct me over to the warden. Mr. Marsden very politely met me at the door of his house, and conducted me into the parlour. My attorney having attended Mr. Woodward and Mr. Stacie there in the morning, to settle for the Rules, the Marshal knew of my coming, and I found everything usual for breakfast prepared against I arrived.

“This grand point being settled, I went to a little

vile lodging, which had been taken for me, at the house belonging to the Windmill in St. George's Fields. For this wretched place I was to pay two guineas a week; but the time to procure me a lodging had been so short, that the first which offered was fixed upon.

"Mr. Marsden attended me himself, with great complaisance, to my new apartments; and I was not a little surprised, upon our being seated, at his taking out a large purse of gold, and presenting it to me, with a request that I would make use of it for my present exigencies, and return it to him when convenient.

"In the evening that gentleman came to pay me a visit; when he advised me to write, as soon as possible, to the Attorney-General, my much honoured friend Mr. Yorke, to consult him upon my case. By Mr. Woodward not making me an offer of his assistance at this time, I was convinced that Miss Wordley's supposition was well founded. Indeed, her sagacity and superior understanding enabled her to see every event clearer, in all points of view, than most people.

"The next day I desired her to take a letter to Mr. Yorke. My honourable (and now, alas! my much regretted) friend immediately wrote me an

answer, wherein he informed me, in the kindest terms, that he would pay every attention to the affair, and would do all in his power to extricate me from it. But as nothing could be done till November, he requested me to accept the inclosed bills, in lieu of what his loved sister, Lady Anson, had intended to bequeath me, had she not been taken away suddenly. He then advised me, if my creditor could not be prevailed on to compromise the debt, to stand trial; when he was well assured, he said, a verdict would be given in my favour; but as his Excellency Comte Haslang was advanced in years, it might continue pending over my head for some time. In how pleasing a manner was this favour conferred! the delicacy and politeness with which it was accompanied gave it double value, and claimed my warmest acknowledgments.

“Finding I must make up my mind to my present situation, as nothing could be done for so long a time, I sent Miss Wordley to seek out another apartment; for though, by Mr. Yorke’s bounty, I found myself possessed of two hundred pounds, yet it was visible that the noble donor had sent me that sum, on purpose to enable me to compromise the debt with Mrs. Ray, should she consent to it. Miss Wordley accordingly fixed on two rooms

adjoining to the Dog and Duck, at twelve shillings a week ; which were more eligible, better furnished, and much airier than those I was now in."

Two rooms adjoining the 'Dog and Duck'! To this condition was the beautiful Bellamy come at last. The rest of her life was of the same complexion ; begging—complaint—appeal to the public—squalor—destitution. A Benefit was arranged for her, and she appeared on the stage, an object more of curiosity than of interest.

"I dwell for a moment," says the pleasant Reynolds, "on a last appearance which I witnessed—namely, that of Mrs. Bellamy, who took her leave of the stage May 24th, 1785. On this occasion Miss Farren, the present Countess of Derby, spoke an address, which concluded with the following couplet :

'But see, oppress'd with gratitude and tears,
To pay her duteous tribute she appears.'

The curtain then ascended, and Mrs. Bellamy being discovered, the whole house immediately arose to mark their favourable inclinations towards her, and from anxiety to obtain a view of this once celebrated actress, and, in consequence of the publication of her life, then celebrated authoress. She was seated in an arm-chair, from which she in vain

attempted to rise, so completely was she subdued by her feelings. She, however, succeeded in muttering a few words, expressive of her gratitude, and then sinking into her seat, the curtain dropped before her."

Some begging appeals to her old friend Tate Wilkinson, "the Wandering Patentee," whose adventures we shall next follow, speak significantly of the straits and misery in which her life was destined to close.*

* It is interesting to know that so far back as the year 1822, these memoirs attracted the attention of M. Thiers, then a young writer in the *Constitutionnel*. To a collection, entitled 'Memoires sur l'Art Dramatique,' now a scarce book, he contributed a sort of abstract of "Mistress Bellamy's" story, in which he dwells on what he terms "the candour of a great soul, which, confident in the nobility of her intentions, revealed every questionable act of her life." Her memoirs, however, were believed to have been written to her dictation by one Bicknell.

CHAPTER V.

THE ADVENTURES OF TATE WILKINSON.*

I.

“I, Tate Wilkinson, whose various stage adventures and *sparrings* have been permitted, and favoured with acceptance, more or less, in almost every principal theatre in the three kingdoms, as Drury Lane, Covent Garden, Haymarket, Smock Alley and Crow Street, Dublin, Bath, Edinburgh, Portsmouth, Winchester, Maidstone, Birmingham, Chester, Bristol, Norwich, York, Shrewsbury, Richmond in Surrey, Exeter, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leeds, Lynn, Pontefract, Halifax, Doncaster, Hull, Wakefield, &c.—am the son of the late Rev. Dr. John Wilkinson, who was educated at St. Bees in Cumberland and finished his studies at the university of Oxford, and who suffered transportation under the well-remembered Marriage Act in 1755. He was his Majesty’s chaplain of the Savoy, also

* Born 1739, died 1803.

chaplain to his late Royal Highness Frederic Prince of Wales. I, Tate Wilkinson," (in this quaint fashion does the graphic but somewhat garrulous player commence his story), "was born October 27, 1739; and, by my father's sentence of transportation, was likely to have been irretrievably ruined. I was, at that critical period, at the age of seventeen—not brought up to any business or profession, of a very indifferent constitution, and neither mother nor son had the least independency.

"Previous to this unfortunate event, my father and mother had been connected with the most leading families, and were universally acquainted in London. Amongst our various visitors were Lord and Lady Forbes, from the sister kingdom. They were so attached to my father and mother, as to be almost inseparable. That intimacy subsisted on so strong a basis, and formed so firm a friendship that they used to call me their *own boy Tate*, and their *dear George's only particular friend*. They promised to fix me genteelly in life; and were certain if George lived to be Earl of Granard, Tate would be well provided for. Airy castles too often gain belief and dependence, when of a sudden they disappear, and wake the deluded dreamer

from his transitory vision, and in lieu present a true mirror in which he views his actual state."

In the midst of a round of pleasant junketing, his father was brought to trial for his continued infringement of the marriage laws in the Savoy, and sentenced to transportation for fourteen years

"The time for his departure was early in March 1757 and the last meeting between father, mother, and son was in that most dreadful of all places, Newgate! We who had for so many years moved in a different sphere, and who were more than commonly united—a description of it must here be omitted; but if the sensible, feeling mind will take a short pause, and honour the ashes of the dead with a moment's reflection and a tear of pity, it will be only paying a tribute due to humanity and mercy; and from whence ideas will flow in painting the result of such a tragical, affecting scene, as imagination will easily describe much stronger than any words can possibly express.

"My dear, benevolent, indulgent, gracious, and loving parent, farewell! May your last blessing procure me, at least, a small portion of your wishes for my short remains of life.

"When they reached the Downs, they could not proceed, the winds would not permit them; from

thence we received a letter containing an account of my father being but very indifferent, as the gout had made a severe attack in his stomach; a complaint with which he was every year more or less afflicted in that dangerous seat of its residence. They were driven by stress of weather into Plymouth, where his enemy, *the gout*, assisted by the severity of the elements, seized this dreadful opportunity to league with Death and violently assaulted a mind and body already loaded with anguish, affection, and affliction, and by finding himself bereft of that assistance and tenderness from those he sighed for, but sighed in vain! the merciless invaders proved too mighty for his fortitude; the noble cordage cracked and broke! Grim Death sat triumphant over his conquered manes!

“Before the end of this tragical story, I must relate that the captain of the vessel had my father privately interred at Plymouth, from whence, as fatality seemed to pervade the whole mysterious event, on the captain’s returning to his ship, his boat was upset by a rough sea, the crew were saved, but the captain perished.”

The little boy had found his way to the theatre, and was encouraged to “take off” the peculiarities of Mrs. Woffington, Quin, and other performers,

which he did also to the delight of friends of the family. When he was left almost destitute after the death of his father, he still hung about the side scenes, evidently one of those forward, pert young fellows who extort a laugh, but about whom no good is prophesied.

“My mother’s friends were capable and willing to afford every support to enable her to keep up a decent appearance, both at home and abroad, by a respectable assistance; which, when so bestowed, will ever gladden the oppressed mind; but not when offered as a supercilious gift—as who should say, ‘I am Sir Oracle!’—‘How good I am!’

“The stage my thoughts had not forgot, though I dared not avow my inclination for it, fearing my patrons and mother would not prefer my being a player to that of an officer. However, unknown to them, I plucked up courage, and waited on Mr. Rich (the manager of Covent Garden Theatre); and after rehearsing several speeches from Richard III. he behaved very familiarly, and desired me to hear HIM act Richard III., and, his acting over, I was without loss of time enrolled on the list of his pupils: but after the honour of attending his levées, having free admission behind the

scenes, and receiving a few lessons from him, he, to my astonishment, declared I was incapable of becoming an actor.

“I lived on hopes, however, that Mr. Rich would ere long perceive my genius, which I assured myself was beyond compare; and soon after, on my repeating the first speech of Richard III. one morning in the exact tone and manner of old Rich, he seemed delighted, and I judged all would soon terminate in the accomplishment of my wishes; but the following odd accident frustrated all my hopes, and I innocently incurred the fixed displeasure of Mr. Rich. This total overthrow to all my expectations was occasioned by Mrs. Woffington. The cause was as follows:—One day my old friend Captain Forbes had invited me to dine with him at the Bedford Arms, and after a choice dinner, with plenty of good wine, &c., the Captain said, ‘Tate, we will go to the play,’ and added that he wished to go behind the scenes: but as I went there only on sufferance, I told him it was not in my power to oblige him. ‘If so,’ said my friend George, ‘we will not separate; for I will treat you to the boxes.’ Being jolly with the bottle, I assented, and when arrived at the theatre, I could not prevail on him to sit any-

where but in the stage box. He was in full guard regimentals—myself by no means dressed fit to appear as his companion; but as he persisted and led the way, I followed, and in front of his Majesty's stage box we were seated; and no more strange than true, the lower sides exhibited a beggarly account of empty boxes.

“Being in such a conspicuous situation, the eyes of the performers from behind the scenes were instantaneously attracted on beholding a poor young lad—a mere dependent (skulking nightly behind the curtain)—placed in a stage box—they were, therefore, astonished at my audacity in usurping and possessing such a particular seat of distinction—and a creature, too, that was destitute, and soliciting for bread, they naturally concluded I had gained admittance by an order, and taken such a place by way of ignorant and impudent bravado, the which deserved chastisement. They sent and spoke to Mr. Rich, and it was agreed that Wilkinson should be instantly ordered from his improper situation. A messenger was sent to put this mandate from Mr. Rich in full force. The box-keeper came to me; and Captain Forbes warm with his wine, and the insult offered to his friend, soon convinced the of-

ficial messenger of his mistake, and the box-keeper was sent back to assure Mr. Rich that Mr. Wilkinson was seated there by proper authority; as Captain Forbes, who was well known by being a constant box attendant at their theatre, had paid ten shillings for admittance. This, I was well informed, caused a general green-room laugh of contempt at the expense of the poor poverty-struck gentleman in the stage box: but unfortunately Mrs. Woffington, who acted Clarissa, having been frequently told that I was remarkable for *taking her off* (as the phrase was, and is), came close to the stage box, finishing her speech with such a sarcastic sneer at me as actually made me draw back. My unfortunate star sure was then predominant, for at that moment a woman of the town, in the balcony above where I was seated, repeated some words in a remarkably shrill tone, which occasioned a general laugh; like electricity it caught Mrs. Woffington's ear, whose voice was far from being enchanting; on perceiving the pipe-squeak on her right hand, and being conscious of the insult she had then given apparently to me, it struck her comprehension so forcibly that she immediately concluded I had given the retort upon her in that open and audacious manner,

to render her acting and tone ridiculous to the audience, as returning contempt for her devilish sneer. She again turned and darted her lovely eyes, though assisted by the furies, which made me look confounded and sheepish; all which only served to confirm my condemnation. When the scene was finished, and she had reached the green-room, she related my insolence in such terms as rendered me a subject of abuse, contempt, and hatred with all the company; but of that circumstance I was quite ignorant:—at the instant I had, it is true, observed, to my mortification, Mrs. Woffington looked angry, but could not divine the real cause.

“The noon following, when I attended Mr. Rich’s levée, I was kept in waiting a considerable time; but as that was, and is, the too common fate of distressed dependence, patience was my friend and companion. At last Mrs. Woffington passed through the room where I was thus humiliated, and without a word, courtesy, or bow of her head, proceeded on to her sedan, from which she as haughtily returned, and advancing towards me with queen-like steps, and viewing me most contemptuously, said—‘Mr. Wilkinson, I have made a visit this morning to Mr. Rich, to command and

to insist on his not giving you any engagement whatever—no, not of the most menial kind—in the theatre. Merit you have none—charity you deserve not,—for if you did my purse should give you a dinner. Your impudence to me last night, where you had with such assurance placed yourself, is one proof of your ignorance; added to that, I heard you echo my voice when I was acting, and I sincerely hope in whatever barn you are suffered as an unworthy stroller, that you will fully experience the same contempt you dared last night to offer me.’ With a flounce and enraged features, without waiting or permitting me to reply, she darted once more into her chair. I really was so astonished, frightened, and bewildered, that I knew not how to act or think, but was relieved from longer suspense and tedious waiting by a message from Rich, intimating that he could not see me at his levée, either that day or in future, or listen to any engagement whatever; for my behaviour was too gross and rude to be justified, and I must immediately depart; but the person added, I might continue the liberty of the scenes during the season, with this proviso, that I should not on any account take the freedom to speak to Mr.

Rich. I wished not, nor had the power, to make an answer.

“Provisions were short at home—my good mother’s poverty increased. One good advantage this distress produced was, that what I should have devoured *that* day, with my noddle full of vanity, was reserved for the *next*—my stomach being quite satisfied with grief, shame, and vexation; poverty pursuing my steps. My mother of course execrated Rich and Woffington; wept over her darling boy, and flew to that Refuge, which she often declared always afforded her support, and had never forsaken her, even when sinking under the greatest affliction; and that Refuge was a constant address to the Deity, and a trust in His Divine mercy. However, I would not give up the play that night, nor in a pet resign my permission of being behind the scenes; but the theatre was no longer that earthly paradise I had formed, for the mist was removed, and I saw actors, actresses, and myself in a different mirror, which convinced me what we all really were.

“When I went into the green-room, an universal laugh of contempt ensued. Woffington, the queen bee of the hive, was there; I had disturbed and

offended her Majesty ; and therefore all her faithful servants, bee-like, joined to sting me, except Mr. Shuter, who saw my distress and good-naturedly took me by the hand, led me to his dressing-room and desired me not to be cast down ; but observed I must not enter the green-room again, as they were one and all determined on my banishment. In such a situation, it will naturally be conceived I had a claim to pity and some little protection, and that players must of course be the most cruel of all people.

“ Mrs. Woffington ever had a train of admirers ; she possessed wit, vivacity, &c., but never permitted her love of pleasure and conviviality to occasion the least defect in her duty to the public as a performer. Six nights in the week has been often her appointed lot for playing without murmuring ; she was ever ready at the call of the audience, and though in the possession of all the first line of characters, yet she never thought it improper, or a degradation of her consequence, to constantly play the Queen in Hamlet, Lady Ann in Richard III., and Lady Percy in Henry IV. ; parts which are mentioned as insults in the country, if offered to a lady of consequence.

“Read this, ye heroes and heroines! She also cheerfully acted *Hermione*, or *Andromache*; *Lady Pliant*, or *Lady Touchwood*; *Lady Sadlife*, or *Lady Dainty*; *Angelica*, or *Mrs. Frail*; and several others alternately, as best suited the interest of her manager.

“One evening, some few weeks after my late mentioned disgrace, *Mrs. Woffington* was acting *Lady Dainty*; I ventured, after much hesitation, to say to *Mrs. Barrington*, I thought *Mrs. Woffington* looked beautiful—*Mrs. Barrington* tossed up her head and said, that was no news, as she looked so every night; at which she and *Mrs. Vincent* laughed: this occasioned *Mrs. Woffington* to turn her head, and condescendingly ask, what they were smiling at. *Mrs. Barrington* replied that the young man was saying that *Lady Dainty* looked beautiful that night, and added, she had told him there needed not that information, as she always looked so. *Mrs. Woffington*, viewing me disdainfully, cried, ‘Poor creature!’ ‘O God!’ says I, ‘what shall I do for bread! I had better exhibit in a barn, but am not sure if I can even get that situation.’ My only comfort was my acquaintance with the facetious *Ned Shuter*; it grew soon to a strong friendship, for he took me to

all his parties, and that made my time glide more pleasantly.

“Unfit for the stage, what could I do? My mother’s existence was procured by the sale or pawning every trifle that could raise a few shillings; and she, trembling to view the darkened prospect when the last resources were expended, compelled me to wait on Mr. Rich once more, and solicit him to retain me on any trifling salary for the ensuing year; but I received a short and peremptory ‘NO! You are unfit for the stage, Muster Whittington, and I wont larn you—you may go, Muster Whittington;’ and he stroked his favourite cat.

“Summer did not promise me better than the winter had done; for with my bad reception I could not get a recommendation or probability of any engagement whatever even in the country. Monday, May 17, 1757, ‘As You Like It’ was acted at Covent Garden, for the benefit of Mr. Anderson, Mr. Wignel, and a Mad. Gondou. I was standing near the wing as Mrs. Woffington in *Rosalind*, and Mrs. Vincent in *Celia*, were going on the stage in the first act. Mrs. Woffington ironically said she was glad to have that opportunity of congratulating me on my stage success;

and did not doubt but such merit would ensure me an engagement the following winter. I bowed, but made her no answer—I knew her dislike to me, and was humiliated sufficiently, and needed not any slight to sink me lower. For then, and not till then, adversity had taught me to know myself. She went through *Rosalind* for four acts without my perceiving she was in the least disordered, but in the fifth she complained of great indisposition. I offered her my arm, the which she graciously accepted; I thought she looked softened in her behaviour, and had less of the *hauteur*. When she came off at the quick change of dress, she again complained of being ill; but got accoutred and returned to finish the part, and pronounced in the epilogue speech, ‘If it be true that good wine needs no bush—it is as true that a good play needs no epilogue,’ &c. &c. But when arrived at ‘If I were among you I would kiss as many of you as had beards that pleased me,’ her voice broke, she faltered, endeavoured to go on, but could not proceed—then in a voice of tremor screamed, ‘O God! O God!’ tottered to the stage door speechless, where she was caught. The audience of course applauded till she was out of sight, and then sank into awful looks of astonishment,

both young and old, before and behind the curtain, to see one of the most handsome women of the age, a favourite principal actress, and who had for several seasons given high entertainment, struck so suddenly by the hand of death in such a situation of time and place, and in her prime of life, being then about forty-four. She was given over that night, and for several days; but so far recovered as to linger till near the year 1760, but existed as a mere skeleton; *sans* teeth, *sans* eyes, *sans* taste, *sans* everything. Vain is Beauty's gaudy flower!"

II.

"A Mrs. Wardale, anxious for my situation and welfare, had prevailed on the Honourable Miss Foley, sister to Lord Foley, to ask the favour of a letter of recommendation from her intimate friend, Lord Mansfield, to Mr. Garrick; which his Lordship immediately complied with: so with those credentials I was to proceed on a visit the next day, and which I assure the reader seemed to me to require more than common fortitude. I marched up and down Southampton Street three or four times before I dared rap at this great man's door, as fearing instant dismissal might

follow; or, what appeared to me almost as dreadful, if graciously admitted, how I should be able to walk, move, or speak before him. However the rap was at last given, and the deed was done past all retreating. 'Is Mr. Garrick at home?' 'Yes.' Then delivering the letter from Miss Foley, with an enclosed one from Lord Mansfield, and after waiting in a parlour for about ten minutes, I was ordered to approach. Mr. Garrick glanced his scrutinizing eye first at me, then at the letter, and so alternately; at last—'Well, sir—Hey!—What, now you are a stage candidate? Well, sir, let me have a taste of your quality.' I, distilled almost to jelly with my fear, attempted a speech from Richard, and another from Essex; which he encouraged by observing, I was so much frightened, that he could not form any judgment of my abilities; but assured me, it was not a bad omen, as fear was by no means a sign of want of merit, but often the contrary. We then chatted for a few minutes, and I felt myself more easy, and requested leave to repeat a few speeches in imitation of the then principal stage representatives. 'Nay—now,' says Garrick, 'sir, you must take care of this, for I used to call myself the first at this business.' I luckily began with an imita-

tion of Foote. It is difficult here to determine whether Garrick hated or feared Foote the most; sometimes one, sometimes the other was predominant; but from the attention of a few minutes, his looks brightened—the glow of his countenance transfused to mine, and he eagerly desired a repetition of the same speech. I was animated, forgot Garrick was present, and spoke at perfect ease. ‘Hey, now! Now—what—all,’ says Garrick—‘How—really this—this—is—(with his usual hesitation and repetition of words)—Why—well—well—Do call on me again on Monday at eleven, and you may depend upon every assistance in my power. I will see my brother manager, Mr. Lacey, to-day, and let you know the result.’

“I now really thought Fortune had done with tormenting me. Honoured not only with the approbation, but friendship, of that great man, I was elated into a degree of rapture I had not experienced for a long time; and in truth I fancied that, should the infallible Pope Garrick quit the stage, either by death, choice, or accident, I should in a few seasons be able to supply the vacant chair: so light is vanity! I did not walk, but flew to my lodgings, where my poor anxious mother sat trembling for the event. The noise I

made in running up the stairs, and my countenance on entering the room, denoted in full evidence that she was to receive good—not bad news. On my relating to her Mr. Garrick's kind behaviour, and his assurance of serving me, she concluded her son Tate's fortune was made: she blessed Garrick! she blessed me! and we were both for that day perfectly happy.

“Mine and my mother's dinner that day (the 25th of May, 1757) was most luxuriant; and I can affirm that neither his Majesty nor any of his subjects dined with better appetite or greater happiness.

“On the Monday, I negligently slid up Southampton Street, not with the tottering attendant fear of the preceding week. I was spruced out, knocked at the door with a degree of assurance, was instantly admitted, and not only found Mr. Garrick alone, but as soon as he saw me, he expressed a wish of impatience for my promised visit; said he had heard a most favourable account of my mother, of whom he had made an enquiry, and should be glad for the sake of so deserving a woman to assist me to the utmost of his power. This was a cordial to my heart; and I believe it may be made a certain observation, that whenever young or old wait on a superior as a dependent

character he or she is anxiously tremulous until satisfied whether the grant can be obtained or not. But now all appeared to me in a happy train. Mr. Garrick said, ‘Young gentleman, I have seen Mr. Lacey, and we are determined to put you on the books at thirty shillings per week the ensuing season. I will think of some line of characters for you to perform on the stage. My time is short, and not at my disposal this morning, as I must be at Hampton to dinner; therefore, as I am on the wing, do oblige me with a repetition of what you recited last Saturday.’ I readily complied, and executed it with spirit. From the imitation of Foote I proceeded with great alacrity to several others; and when I came to those of Mr. Barry and Mrs. Woffington, as Macbeth and Lady Macbeth, I was obliged to stop, he seemed so truly entertained. I thought it very comical, and that the joke might not be lost I laughed too; but on the merriment ceasing, I perceived a concealed third laugher—the Lady Teazle behind the screen, which greatly puzzled me; when on a sudden a green cloth double door flew open, which I found led to a little breakfast parlour, and discovered a most elegant lady—no less a personage than Mrs. Garrick, who had, it seems, been purposely posted there for her

secret opinion of my imitations of Foote; as Mr. Garrick always affected to pay great compliment to her judgment and opinion, and I really believe not all acted complaisance, but founded on real esteem. But like his brethren mortals, he had his frailties.

“Mrs. Garrick apologized for her rudeness and intrusion—confessed she had taken possession of that snug spot unobserved, at the desire of Mr. Garrick, as from his account of my imitations on the Saturday, she expected to be much gratified; but when she heard the tones of Mrs. Woffington, the ridicule was so strongly pointed, that it was not in her power to restrain from laughter, by the pleasure and great satisfaction she had received. If it had happened otherwise Mrs. Mouse would not have appeared, but kept snug in her hole. Perhaps female prejudice here might operate in my favour, as Mr. Garrick had previous to his marriage with Madam Violette, paid his devoirs to Mrs. Woffington.

“Before I took my leave, I acquainted our Roscius with my intention relative to Maidstone, which he approved, and said practice would acquire me freedom and ease on the stage—it was what he had done previous to his public appearance in

London : but the chief lesson he would give to a young man trying his fortune on the stage was *sobriety*. I made my bow and departed, not doubting but when the autumn approached I should read my name in the newspapers, and (as the Apprentice says) stuck in large capitals—

‘The part of OTHELLO, by a Young Gentleman.’”

The young fellow was a free and mischievous creature who had been spoiled by the flatteries and laughter of friends. He was now as much elated as he had been depressed ; and probably had been cleverly taking off his new patron, or giving some grotesque description of the interview ; for, on the season opening, he was somewhat taken down by the following summary treatment.

“Early in September 1757, Drury Lane opened, and I attended, as being then enrolled on the royal list of his Majesty’s company of comedians. On the rehearsal of ‘Romeo and Juliet,’ I was summoned on the stage by Cross the prompter, who said he had orders from Mr. Garrick that I should wait as a Torch Bearer in the last act, and also as a Waiting Gentleman in every play. On which Mr. Garrick advanced, and, before the company, said aloud, ‘This, sir, is my command—and if

not complied with I shall take your coat off and do the business myself; and you, sir, will immediately be dismissed my theatre.' There certainly was a severity in this; for though I stood astonished, grieved, and petrified at this sudden appointment, I had not refused; and therefore the pointed manner in which he spoke, was tyranny, in a degree I never then had seen exercised without provocation."

III.

"The theatre being for the first month opened three nights in a week, my salary was only fifteen shillings as pay-house play, and when got to four nights, merely twenty shillings; but that pittance was too material an object for me to think of relinquishing. I waited (as it is termed) in the 'Mourning Bride'—the funeral procession in 'Romeo and Juliet'—'Macbeth,' and twice rode a hobby horse in the field of battle, when Garrick acted Bayes. The last week of Mr. Foote's playing in Drury-Lane, previous to his intended trip to Ireland, he was accidentally with Garrick. The conversation, as I was informed, by chance turned on imitation. Garrick said, "Egad, Foote! there is a young fellow engaged with me, who I

really think is superior to either of us at mimicry. I used to think myself well at it, but I actually give him the preference: he has tried to resemble me, but that will not do; though Mrs. Garrick says she is sure he will be like me.' 'D—n it!' says Foote, 'I should like to hear him.' Holland, with Garrick's approbation, came immediately to inquire for me. I was soon found in the green-room, and escorted to the manager's cabinet, assuring me that Mr. Garrick wanted to see me on particular business. My heart panted with fear, doubt, and hope, on this unexpected summons. After an awkward entrance, and a silence of a few minutes, my suspense was eased by Mr. Garrick very good-naturedly saying, that he had spoken well of me to Mr. Foote, and desired I would satisfy that gentleman with a taste of my quality such as first struck my fancy; adding, that he expected I would do my best in order to convince his *good* friend, Mr. Foote, that his assertions of my merit were not exaggerated. I complied, and (as the phrase is) *took off* several performers—Barry, Sparks, Woffington, Ridout, Sheridan, &c.—received high encomiums and thanks—made my bow and retired from the august assembly.

"The next day my friend, Mr. Owenson, who was

intimate with Foote, waited on me with that gentleman's compliments, intimating, that he was going to Dublin for a few weeks in five or six days' time. He had observed Mr. Garrick thought me only fit for his Hobby Horse in the 'Rehearsal,' and if I wished to be released from such tyranny, he would be glad of my company to Ireland at his own expense, and he would fix me on genteel terms with Mr. Sheridan; that I should appear in *Othello*, and he would act *Iago*. This was a cheering cordial elixir to my drooping spirits and to my still more drooping pocket. On the evening I met my Master—Garrick—at the theatre, who confirmed the above treaty, and said he was glad of an opportunity to serve me, and hoped it would turn out advantageous. My equipment was poorly provided; my old black was my only suit, a small pair of bags easily contained my wardrobe. My mother dreaded this long voyage, and being used to vexation and crosses, experience made her give me but little hopes from Irish hospitality, or the appearance of a shabby distressed lad soliciting favours.

“From lodging, livelihood, and support, all that my mother could spare to give me to supply my empty purse with was six shillings; but luckily

Mrs. Wardale, the lady of Carlisle before mentioned, hearing of my journey, and knowing mine and my mother's inability, presented me with two guineas. I took leave of my affectionate parent, met Mr. Foote at the Bedford Arms, and in one hour after set off with him in a post-chaise, and his servant on horseback. We only travelled that night to his little cottage at Elstree, in Hertfordshire. Two days after that, we dined at Kitty Keney's, at West Chester, and the following day went with Capt. Bonfoy, who was then commander of the Royal Yacht, for Park Gate, as the Captain said he would sail that afternoon. Here we were detained with several persons of fashion, who had been impatiently attending on the caprice of the wind. Mr. Hill, an elderly gentleman, Lord Macartney, Mr. Leeson, now Lord Milltown, and several others; we all went on board, but all returned, as the wind continued obstinate. We all messed together; for Foote's company, as he was well acquainted with each, was the only treat that truly dreary place Park Gate could afford. Our patience being exhausted, it was unanimously agreed that we should proceed to Holyhead; horses were hired. This was early in November, and was not pleasing to me, who had never ridden twenty miles

on horseback in my life ; however there was no alternative, as I was become a dependent traveller, and must submit to follow. I thought we were all to have set off together ; they went at seven o'clock in the morning, requesting Foote's company at each house they stopped at ; but Foote and myself remained behind, and on my asking him the reason of his delay, he answered, that it was a rule of his, and worth my observation, that whenever he met with persons of distinction and fortune on the road travelling to small inns (as was, and is the case on the Welsh roads), he made it a rule always to be half a day behind or before them ; as, with all their politeness, they expected the best accommodations ; or if they were so kind as to offer you a preference, you could not in policy or good manners accept such an offer ; therefore you never could on such a journey be well suited or attended, unless by being the stage, at least, before or after them ; and if going to another inn, the landlady of the neglected house would pique herself on her behaviour, to convince her guests they had paid the compliment of preference not to her only, but for their own comfort and advantage.

“Holyhead in Wales is eighty-seven miles from West Chester ; there we were detained again some

days, and strange but true, the high living with the persons at that place, and a severe cold, had kept me ill in bed most part of that day ; the wind changed, but it changed to a violent storm, and at nine at night, all dark and dismal, did we roll in the boat belonging to the packet, over waves most dreary to behold ; for the whiteness of the breakers shone double from the darkness of the night. When handed into the packet, I asked for a bed ; but they were all secured, not even one for Mr. Foote, as plenty of cash from the great people had made that request impossible to be complied with. The cabin was wedged like the black-hole at Calcutta. The tumultuous moving of the ship soon made my inquiries after a bed of down quite needless, for I sank on the boards, where my poverty bags were my only pillow, and there I lay tossed in the most convulsive sickness that can be imagined. I have seen many suffer by this sea malady, but never, I verily think, such an object of commiseration as myself. The storm increased, but the wind was fair for Ireland ; as to death, I was so truly sick, that I was very indifferent whether I sank or swam. Mr. Foote was tolerably well, and walking most of the night from place to place.

“Thank God, we arrived safe in Dublin Bay about twelve o’clock, and by one were taken in a Dunleary hoy to Dublin Quay; a coach conveyed us to a tavern in College Green, where we were regaled. I say we, though I continued very sick and much out of order. In about an hour Mr. Foote went to the lodgings provided for him, and left me to take care of myself. I inquired for an hotel, and was directed to one on Essex Quay, to which place I took coach; where, overpowered with illness, sickness, and fatigue, I went to bed and lay till Monday noon, but in a comfortless state. I rang the bell for breakfast, but it did not afford relief; and about four o’clock in the afternoon, crawled to the house I remembered to have left the day before in College Green, where I had soup, chicken, and wine, and after sitting full two hours fancied myself better, owing to the momentary spirits the wine had given me. Paying for my repast, I inquired of the waiter where Mrs. Chaigneau lived; he replied just over the way. This was agreeable intelligence, as indeed that was the family, the reader I hope will kindly recollect, I so particularly mentioned in the first part of my history. Then my fluttering heart hoped welcome to the poor, the orphan, and the stranger; next

the apprehension of a rebuff occurred, but distress of situation pushed me on, and to the house, as directed, I went. When I had advanced with trembling and tottering steps to the corner palace, and inquiring if Mrs. Chaigneau was at home, I was answered with an affirmative. I desired the servant to acquaint his mistress that a person from England requested to speak with her, and after waiting a few minutes (which my impatience doubled) a thin-looking lady entered the room, but I could not recollect a feature, or any likeness to resemble the form I expected to behold; but supposed time or illness might have made heavy inroads on the brittle frame. With the utmost agitation I presumed to inquire if her name was Chaigneau. The lady answered, 'Yes.' I then ventured to pronounce, 'Madam, I flatter myself you recollect me when you were in England; my name is Wilkinson, son of the late Doctor Wilkinson of the Savoy.' She answered, 'Indeed, sir, you are mistaken.' This was a thunder-stroke, as my fears interpreted it a wilful disclaiming of her knowledge of me; but I was after a pause relieved by her looking serious and repeating to herself—'Wilkinson! Wilkinson!'—and suddenly saying 'O, young gentleman! I beg your pardon; I believe

I can now clear up this mistake, in which we both are at present involved.—I have often heard your father and mother mentioned in terms of the highest regard by my brother and sister Chaigneau. You, as a stranger, have made a mistake as to the house. I am married to Mr. John Chaigneau, brother to Mr. William Chaigneau, and to whose house you have been wrongly directed. They live in Abbey Street. I not knowing the way, she requested her servant might call a coach for me, which was instantly done (as there was then, and always is a stand of coaches in College Green). I was driven to Abbey Street, and on my road over Essex Bridge was vastly pleased at seeing the number of lamps, sedan chairs, carriages, hackney coaches, footmen with flambeaux, &c., as it appeared to resemble another London. When arrived at Abbey Street, and the awful rap was given, I was not only, from frequent misfortunes and disappointments, all flutter, but found myself not well ; yet I gave myself the comfort to attribute it to fancied illness, proceeding from anxiety, distress, and unaccustomed fatigue ; and therefore hoped it would go off. The first answer to my inquiry at Mr. William Chaigneau's door from the servant was, that he could not tell whether either

his master or mistress were at home or not, but would go and see; he soon returned with an answer more potent than the first—that they were both at home, and what was more fortunate, they were without company. I had no sooner entered the room where they were sitting, than—than what? —why, to proceed requires the *best* of novel pens to present, fulfil, and do service to the scene that followed. This generous Mr. William Chaigneau and wife were on the list of the few instances where

‘Mutual temper with unclouded ray,
Could make to-morrow welcome as to-day.’

“Their pleasures were the same—their affections were the same. Their instantaneous recollection of me—the great intimacy between the families—my father’s death and calamities being so lately public, and now refreshed to their memory, revived the idea of their own distress from the loss of their darling child, the infant-marriage between me and that daughter, my present assured, unfortunate, helpless situation, with a look of desponding hope dependent on their feelings, all collected rushed on their alternate sudden thoughts with such quick transitions, as made them all combined too mighty

for Mrs. Chaigneau's tender spirits; indeed so powerfully, that the fictitious distress of Lady Randolph on the stage was by no means equal to her poignant sense of my misery and situation; and it was actually some time before she could recover herself with any degree of composure to inquire what had brought me there, or what could be done to serve me. Mr. Chaigneau was also greatly agitated; but not to so extravagant a degree as my good benefactress, as she afterwards proved to the utmost extent. After a little composure, and my full relation of what had happened to my mother and myself since the fatal marriage act passed, a comfortable supper was set on the table. After which pleasing ceremony, they assured me that every exertion in their power and all their friends and connexions, I might as much depend upon as if the welfare of their own son was the person whose interest they were to plead for.

“During a short interval I felt elated beyond myself, the transition was so wonderful: but, alas! how fleeting are human joys as to pain, hope, or sorrow! For soon after this pleasing unforeseen sensation of rapture, I suddenly sank into an heavy feverish languor, not in my power to

uphold. Mrs. Chaigneau exclaimed, 'My God! Tate is ill!' Her words were prophetic; I wished and tried to shake it off, but all in vain;—disorder and delirium grew too powerful, my head felt dreadfully deranged. My real friends, in every sense of the word, were alarmed; Mrs. Chaigneau declared she could not permit me by any means to return to the hotel in such a state of apparent illness as I then seemed to labour under. They sent to the next door, engaged a comfortable lodging for me, and provided me with hock-wine, whey, and such accommodation as they thought immediately necessary. The ensuing day, instead of finding myself relieved, I was seized most dangerously by an outrageous miliary fever.

"In that outrageous fever did I continue, and in a truly lamentable state, with a complication of distraction and agony, for near three weeks; blisters on my ankles, and every physical torture to increase my miseries. Mr. Chaigneau often used to joke and say, what an expensive guest I was to him for his old hock; the quantity I drank in whey, by his account, was incredible. However Providence, aiding my youth, brought me once more into the world; and here I must not omit my sincere and grateful acknowledg-

ments to God. For, good reader, will you believe it, that all this time of my severe suffering, notwithstanding Mr. Foote must have heard I had left the hotel and tavern with evident marks of indisposition, he never once (to the disgrace of Christianity be it asserted!) made inquiry whether I was living or dead; or if living, whether I had decent necessities.

“Before I was able to go abroad, or even to leave my apartments, I sent my compliments to Mr. Foote, to acquaint him where I was; for Mr. and Mrs. Chaigneau were so offended at such brutality of behaviour towards me, that neither of them had given him any intelligence concerning me. Mr. Foote on my information, waited on Mr. Chaigneau, and by way of apology, said he could not see me for three or four days for fear of catching the infection from the fever—professed himself anxious to supply my wants, which he was informed was at that time quite unnecessary. After that he waited on me as my most *anxious* friend, and in about three weeks I recovered so fast, by the help of my good nurses, that I dined every day with my preserving angels at the next door; was attended every noon with jellies, &c.; and what was more extraordinary, had my chariot

every morning at the door to take my daily airing. O gemini! a coach!

“As soon as I was able to be taken by my patrons a visiting, an elegant suit of clothes was provided for me, that I might be a credit, and *not* by my thread-bare appearance disgrace either my friends or myself. Mr. and Mrs. Chaigneau introduced me to all their acquaintance; nor could they be pleased more, than by any act of kindness that was bestowed on me. Their connections were particularly numerous, Mr. William Chaigneau being principal agent to most of the regiments on the Irish establishment, and was consequently universally known, and likewise respected.

“All the families in Ireland with whom my father and mother had formerly been intimate in London, proved by innumerable acts of generosity and true zeal for my welfare, that friendship is sometimes more than a name. On my visiting abroad, I was soon invited to Lord Forbes’s in Stephen’s Green, also to the Kellys’, Alderman and Mrs. Forbes’s, Acheson’s, Collage’s, John Chaigneau’s, Coates’s, Hamilton’s, &c., and received particular favour from those persons, as well as from Lord Clanbrassil, Lord Bellamont,

Lord Milltown, Mr. Hill, Miss Knoxes, &c. &c. At each of the above families', in the full meaning of the word, I had a home, and I never received a cool look unless for staying away, though a favour may be bestowed with an ill grace; and I will beg leave here to give an instance. Lord Forbes I had been used to see frequently in London, even from the time of my wearing frocks; and I am certain his invitations in Dublin were intended most friendly, and his will was ever to serve me; but one day on dining with his Lordship, when several persons of quality were invited—the bottle, our sun of the table—after dinner moved quickly round, and as the wine circulated, not feeling any restraint, and his Lordship not being a stranger to me, I very heartily smacked my lips, and said, 'O my lord, this is excellent wine!' On which he paused, and looking full at me (by which means he drew the attention of the whole company), said, with a satirical smile, 'Pray, Tate, what or who has made you a judge of wine? Never give your judgment in company as to wine; for in a young man like you it is not becoming or proper.' This effectually silenced me; nay, it did worse than that, for it made me feel my inferiority, and I

was abashed and unhappy till released that evening from the company of the great, and which two hours before had greatly elated me. . .

“Near Christmas I began to think of making my appearance on the stage. . .

“It was appointed for me to appear the Monday following in Mr. Foote’s ‘Tea,’ in the character of a pupil under Mr. Puzzle, the supposed director of a rehearsal. Mr. Puzzle, by Mr. Foote. He sent me a part called Bounce, but which I begged, as the time was so short, to decline; and, as I did not attend any rehearsal, it was agreed that I should appear as Mr. Wilkinson (his pupil) when called upon, and repeat just what I could select to please myself—not any regular character.

“When the night came, Lord Forbes, Mr. Chaigneau, and all my friends, went to encourage and support me, and engaged all they knew for the same purpose. One lucky circumstance was my not being known as a performer, therefore I had their wishes and pity in a high degree—but great fear of my not being able to succeed. The story of my distressed situation—the blazoned Marriage Act—my being a young gentleman—my illness, &c. &c. were become topics of public conversation: as to intelligence, requested by critics from the

players relative to myself, they neither did nor could pronounce, with knowledge, either good or ill. *But I will rather suppose five out of six spoke to my disadvantage,** from the too general depravity of human nature; as persons listen to satire rather than praise: it is more descriptive, displays the tripping tongue, and suits conversation much better; it gives energy to the informant, and quick ears to the languid. The bill ran thus:

‘ After the PLAY

Mr. FOOTE will give TEA.

Mr. PUZZLE (the Instructor) Mr. FOOTE.

First PUPIL, by a YOUNG GENTLEMAN

(*Who never appeared on any Stage before*).’

By eight in the evening I was in full dress behind the scenes; I had never been there before; the company were all strangers to me. Not knowing how to enter into conversation with the performers, and being announced as a pupil of Mr. Foote’s, I did not receive any civility from them; for, if I was a blockhead, I was not worth their notice; and if an impudent imitator or mimic of their profession, bred by Mr. Foote in the same

* This cynical remark will be noted as showing knowledge of human character. Indeed all his observations on the players’ nature are well worthy of study.

worthy art, I was, in their opinion, a despicable intruder. I could conceive all this, and certainly my situation on this critical night was not to be envied, as their sentiments, though not avowed, were the result of nature. I, on reflection, soon grew weary of my solitary seat in the green-room, alone in a crowd; and between the play and farce looked through a hole in the curtain, and beheld an awful, pleasing sight—a crowded, splendid audience—such as might strike the boldest with dismay.

“The farce began, and Mr. Foote gained great applause, and roars of laughter succeeded. In the second act my time of trial drew near; in about ten minutes I was called—‘Mr. Wilkinson! Mr. Wilkinson!’ Had I obeyed a natural impulse, I was really so alarmed that I should have run away. But honour pricked me on—there was no alternative—my brain was a chaos; but on I went, and must have made a very sheepish, timid appearance, as, from fear, late illness, and apprehension, I trembled like a frightened clown in a pantomime: which Foote perceiving, good-naturedly took me by the hand and led me forward; when the burst of applause was wonderful, and apparently that of kindness and true benevo-

lence; but it could not instantly remove my timidity; and I had no prompter to trust to, as all depended on myself.

“Foote perceiving I was not fit for action, said to his two friends on the stage (seated like Smith and Johnson in the ‘Rehearsal’): ‘This young gentleman is merely a novice on the stage; he has not yet been properly drilled. But come, my young friend, walk across the stage; breathe yourself, and show your figure.’ I did so; the walk encouraged me, and another loud applause succeeded. I felt a glow, which seemed to say, ‘What have you to fear! Now, or never. This is the night that either makes you or undoes you quite.’ And on the applause being repeated, I said to myself, ‘That is as loud as any I have heard given to Mr. Garrick.’ I mustered up courage, and began with Mr. Luke Sparks, of London (brother to Isaac Sparks, then in Dublin), in the character of Capulet: most of the gentlemen in the boxes knew all the London players, and no play in London was so familiar then as ‘Romeo and Juliet.’ They were universally struck with the forcible manner of the speaking, and the striking resemblance of the features; a particular excellence in my mode of mimicry. A gentleman cried out,

‘Sparks of London! Sparks of London!’ The applause resounded, even to my astonishment; and the audience were equally amazed, as they found *something*, where they in fact expected *nothing*. Next speech was their favourite Barry in ‘Alexander’; universally known, and as universally felt. I now found myself vastly elevated and clever: fear was vanished, and joy and pleasure succeeded; a proof what barometers we are! how soon elated, and how soon depressed! When quite at ease, I began with Mrs. Woffington in Lady Macbeth, and Barry in Macbeth. The laughter (which is the strongest applause on a comic occasion) was so loud and incessant, that I could not proceed. This was a minute of luxury; I was then in the region of bliss; I was encored; yet that lady had declared in London, on hearing I was to go with Foote to Ireland, ‘Take me off! a puppy!—if he dare attempt it, by the living G—d he will be stoned to death.’ Here the lady was mistaken; for, on repeating the part, the second applause was stronger than the preceding. A sudden thought occurred; I felt all hardy—all alert—all nerve—and immediately advanced six steps; and, before I spoke I received the full testimony of ‘true imitation!’ My master, as he was called,

sat on the stage at the same time; I repeated twelve or fourteen lines of the very prologue he had spoken that night (being called for) to the 'Author,' and he had almost every night repeated: I, before Mr. Foote, presented his other self; the audience from repetition were as perfect as I was; his manner, his voice, his oddities, I so exactly hit, that the pleasure, the glee it gave, may easily be conceived, to see and hear the mimic mimicked, and it really gave me a complete victory over Mr. Foote; for the suddenness of the action tripped up his audacity so much, that he, with all his effrontery, sat foolish, wishing to appear equally pleased with the audience, but knew not how to play that difficult part: he was unprepared; the surprise and satisfaction were such, that, without any conclusion, the curtain was obliged to drop with reiterated bursts of applause.

"When the farce was concluded, I had great congratulations paid seriously and ironically. Mr. Foote affected to be vastly pleased, but in truth it was merely affectation—so differently do we feel for ourselves when ridicule is pointed at us; but he said, it was perfectly well judged to make free with him, yet he did not think it very like himself, for it certainly was my worst imitation, but he re-

joiced at my good fortune. In truth, Mr. Foote got the cash, not me; what I did was for him, as he acted on shares; and the fuller the house, the greater was his profit. He was piqued and chagrined.

“The conversation the next day, particularly of all my eager partial friends, was an universal cry of ‘Foote outdone! Foote outdone! the pupil the master!’ and this was greatly assisted by their agreeable disappointment; for I do not believe any one of them, however warm they might have been in their wishes for my welfare, but trembled for the event; they felt unhappy lest I should make a despicable attempt, and be universally disapproved; and then reflected within themselves, ‘Good Heaven! what is to become of this poor youth? what can he do for a subsistence?’ After my performance, from the success I had met with, I could neither eat, drink, nor sleep that night; pleasant dreams I needed not; my waking thoughts were so much superior.

“The ‘Tea,’ was acted in regular succession several nights, nay, it was commanded by the Duke and Duchess of Bedford; his Grace was at that time Lord Lieutenant.

“After the first night of my performance, Mr.

Sheridan appointed me a salary of three guineas per week, and requested, with my approbation (which was readily obtained), that Mr. Foote would write to Mr. Garrick to grant permission for my continuance in Dublin till the end of February. Foote was obliged to go to England with all speed, as he had stayed beyond his time; but I was left behind, waiting for Mr. Garrick's answer to Mr. Sheridan's request, but which soon arrived, and granted the petition requested by Mr. Foote."

One day when discussing a Benefit, the Manager suggested that the imitations would be more piquant if he made the actors of the theatre the subject of his exertions. The scene that followed was admirable. "I observed to him, that I had not had leisure to have paid a sufficient attention to that company, as objects for imitation; besides, were I capable, if I should take that freedom, they would most likely not only insult me, but make it a plea to refuse acting for my benefit. That argument seemed with Mr. Sheridan to have but little weight; he persisted angrily. I then intimated, that if I complied, I hoped he would not have any objection to my using his name, and that I did not do it of my own accord, but had his express command for that purpose. Mr. Sheridan

seemed much vexed; said that what he had asked me to do was to get me applause, and to serve me, not himself; but he should by no means consent to my exposing the peculiarities of his actors and actresses under the sanction of his desire and approbation; he wished it to come before the audience as a sudden surprise, and as my own voluntary act, and after that had been done, he would have taken care to have had it so called for by the audience as to prevent a possibility of the performers' anger being of weight sufficient to prevent its repetition; and the more it vexed the actors and actresses, the greater relish it would give the audience: that I believe was too true.

“However, I continued my objection, but at last (like a fool in the knowledge of mankind and the human heart) a lucky bright thought, as I judged it, occurred to me; and I said, ‘My good Mr. Sheridan, I have hit upon the very thing to establish myself as a favourite with you, and the town.’ He seemed all impatience to know what it could be. ‘My dear sir, a thought has just entered my pate, which I think will draw money, and be of infinite service to myself.’ ‘What is it? What is it?’ says Sheridan, with the utmost eagerness. ‘Why, sir,’ says I, ‘your rank in the theatre, and a gentleman

so well known in Dublin, on and off the stage, must naturally occasion any striking imitation of yourself to have a wonderful effect. I have paid great attention to your whole mode of acting, not only since I have been in Dublin, but two years before, when you played the whole season at Covent Garden Theatre; and do actually think I can do a great deal on your stage with you alone, without interfering with any other actor's manner whatever.'

"Hogarth's pencil could not testify more astonishment; he turned red and pale alternately—his lips quivered. I instantaneously perceived I was in the wrong box; it was some time before he could speak—he took a candle from off the table, and showing me the room door—when at last his words found utterance—said, he never was so insulted. What! to be taken off by a buffoon upon his own stage! And as to mimicry, what is it? Why, a proceeding which he never could countenance; that he even despised Garrick and Foote for having introduced so mean an art; and he then very politely desired me to walk down stairs. Mr. Sheridan held the candle for me only till I got to the first landing, and then hastily removed it grumbling and speaking to himself, and leaving

me to feel my way in the dark, down a pair and a half of steep stairs, and to guess my road in hopes of finding the street-door.

“After this fracas he never permitted me to play, or spoke to me during my stay in Ireland (my own night excepted). I fixed on ‘Jane Shore’ and ‘Tom Thumb,’ for my play and farce, on the night allotted me, Saturday, February 25, 1758.

“Mr. Chaigneau himself waited on Mrs. Fitzhenry to request her powerful assistance in Alicia to which request she kindly assented.

“The rapid step from my late illness, extreme poverty, and friendless situation had taken such a turn, that with my coach, table acquaintance presents, and great benefit I thought my fortune made, and early in March, with true-felt gratitude; not from that day, week, or month, but never effaced to the present moment, now including above thirty-two years, I took leave of my good friends, in possession of two valuable gifts, health and wealth. Indeed to the wonderful care of these good and undescribable persons can I only attribute my existence, and also my wealth, as from that time, till encumbered with the cares of my present unpromising and perplexed state, I never knew, in the course of several years, the want of cash; which

state of happiness my after frequent visits to Dublin made me, as a young man, in a kind of independence.

“With now 130*l.* in that pocket which a very few months before contained only two guineas (and which I then termed a treasure)—but good God ! what a change !—like a ten-thousand-pound prize to a cobbler—I sailed from Ireland with a fair wind, attended by the waft of numberless good wishes for my safe arrival in Old England.

“Soon after my arrival, I presented myself with as much duty as pleasure to my dear mother, as every son should and ought to do, and am certain the return was overpaid by her. Her joy, surprise, and a thousand etceteras which may be supposed—and only affectionate and good mothers can feel such heavenly sensations : I do not speak from supposition, but can aver that though there was, is, and ever will be good parents, yet mine was really sprung from the tree called the Nonpareil ; and I can with truth boast I possessed one truly praiseworthy quality, and that was, being one of the best sons, not from any merit as a duty from myself due to my mother, but because I loved and revered her worth, and conversed with my true friend. The giving to her an account of my

riches, and my friends in Ireland, was a feast ; and my producing the 130*l.* bill was a dazzling sight indeed, though only in black and white letters."

III.

With this dangerous weapon of mimicry as stock in trade, the young man prospered in his career. His amusing gifts—invaluable at a supper—found him plenty of acquaintances, though not friends, for they involved him in many awkward positions. Nothing is more ludicrous than his sketch of Foote, and the trepidation and fury of the great mimic, when he found his own arms turned against himself, with the description of the contest in Garrick's breast, between satisfaction at seeing an enemy ridiculed, and what he felt was his duty. Indeed in the exhibition of the meaner corners of human character Wilkinson is excellent.

When he returned to town Mr. Garrick determined to bring the two mimics out in their Dublin entertainment, which was thus advertized :

"DIVERSIONS OF THE MORNING.

Principal Characters,

Mr. FOOTE,

Mr. HOLLAND,

Mr. PACKER,

with others,

And Mr. WILKINSON,'

without my 'first appearance,' which certainly was unkind and unprecedented, as it did not introduce me to the candour of the public, which they ever grant to a young performer and novice on the stage. However, this is an after-thought; for I was at that time highly gratified with the large letters in which my name was printed, a foible natural to every candidate. Soon after this farce was known by the town to be in rehearsal, some Mrs. Candour gave my friend Mrs. Woffington the alarm, who still lived and existed on the flattering hopes of once more captivating the public by her remaining rays of beauty (born to bloom and fade); and who declared she was astonished on hearing I had survived my presumption in Ireland, in daring there to take her off.

"On deliberation she deputed Colonel Cæsar to wait on Mr. Garrick. He said to Mr. Garrick, he should not be surprised if young Wilkinson had success on such an attempt; but as the performance might render her, as an actress, ridiculous, his intention as a visitor to Garrick was to inform him, if he permitted such procedure or achievement from Mr. Wilkinson on his stage, he must expect from him (Col. Cæsar) to be seriously called upon as a gentleman to answer it. Mr. Garrick

immediately not only acquiesced, but expressed a detestation of any such performance (*bless his good-nature*), and coincided in opinion that such an attempt on the merits of Mrs. Woffington's acting would be illiberal and unwarrantable in the highest degree.

"The day before the piece was to be acted he summoned Foote and me, and related the above-mentioned particulars, and informed us that his word and honour were engaged to Colonel Caesar that Mr. Wilkinson should not take the liberty to make any line, speech, or manner relative to Mrs. Woffington, or presume to offer or occasion any surmise of likeness, so as to give the least shadow of offence, on any account whatever. This I subscribed to on Mr. Garrick's commands, and Mr. Foote became my bail for the same—for Garrick was really on this matter very uneasy with Foote, and Wilkinson, his d—d exotics.

"The 'Diversions of the Morning' was at length produced in October, and to an overflowing theatre. Curiosity was universally raised to see Mr. Foote's pupil, as I was called, and to this hour by many believed. Mr. Foote's acquaintance were numerous, and of the first circles; and he took every precaution and care, for his own sake (for fear of

failure or party), to have me strongly supported, and he blazed forth Wilkinson's wonderful merit, as on my success he intended what he put into execution, which was, to give me the labouring oar and make myself a number of implacable enemies: and as to the money I brought, he judged it only safe and fit for his own emolument.

“In the second act of the farce *he*, by his pupils, called me on as Mr. Wilkinson—Mr. Wilkinson! I was received with every pleasing token by the first audience in the world for candour and liberality—for such London certainly is when unbiassed;—it most assuredly commands and deserves that appellation. The scene between Mr. Foote and myself went off with great *éclat*; on my departure from the stage, while he did his puppets, &c., the audience grew very impatient by seeing my exit, and judged that was all the new actor was to do; and, feeling a disappointment, from murmuring they grew impatient, and at last burst out into vehemently asking for Wilkinson, and desiring to be informed if that was the only performance they were to expect from that young gentleman. This loud interruption was not paying him his accustomed attention, and he seemed much nettled; however, he bowed, and said the new performer

was only retired for a little respite necessary for his following part of the entertainment. This answer was approved, and Mr. Foote was proceeding, but the little clamour had reached and disturbed the minds of the gods, and John Bull, as well as their godships, thinking Mr. Foote meant to deprive them of part of their rights, though they could not tell what, as they had not all heard Mr. Foote's apology distinctly, again repeated, 'Wilkinson! Wilkinson!' Foote at this second interruption grew really offended, and having secured the lower house, he stopped and said to Mr. Manly (Holland, who was on the stage with him), 'Did you ever hear such fellows? D—n it, they want the fifth act of a play before the second is over!' And as what he said generally passed current, this occasioned an universal roar, and all went on peaceably, and with great good-humour, till the appointed time for my second entrance, which was near the conclusion—the people eager to applaud they knew not why or what, but full of expectation that some strange performance was to be produced—and, indeed, to give an account of the approbation, the sudden effect, the incessant laughter, would argue so much of the fabulist, and of dear self, that it would surfeit

even me to read ; and if so, how would an entire stranger feel ? why treat it with an angry or contemptuous opinion ! Therefore let it suffice, that everything succeeded that night that could gratify the pride, vanity, and most sanguine wishes of a young man greedy for fame.

“The next night the house was jammed in every part—the morning of which it was strongly rumoured that the actors of Covent Garden were highly enraged—that Mr. Sparks in particular was really disordered on the occasion. Mr. Holland called at the theatre, and informed Mr. Garrick and Mr. Foote, he had actually heard that Mr. Sparks was so much hurt and unhappy, that he had taken to his bed and was dangerously ill ; Foote immediately replied (in his laughing manner) that it could not be true, or, that it must be a d—d lie ; for he had met his wife with two pounds of mutton-chops on a skewer for her husband’s dinner. This impromptu occasioned a hearty green-room laugh ; for the actors in general disliked Foote at that time, and did not relish his writings on account of the freedoms he often took with the profession, as, when introduced, the actors and managers were generally mentioned in a degrading light. Though he knew the public relished the severity,

yet in fact it was not generous or neat to dirty his own nest instead of cleansing the theatrical stable; and his having been free with the performer's mode of playing had occasioned very little regard from any, and from several a fixed hatred. He had a number of enemies in private life. Indeed many domestic characters severely felt his comic lash, which was smarting to those on whom it was inflicted; but still his universal acquaintance, his wit, humour, open house, and entertaining qualities raised him superior to his maligners, and in general he rolled in luxury and indolence. It would have been much more unfashionable not to have laughed at Foote's jokes than even at Quin's.*

"This little piece went on in a most flourishing state till about the fifth or sixth night, when Mr. Sparks of Covent Garden Theatre felt himself so wounded by my attack on his acting (which truly was a very picturesque one, and those who remember him and me at that time will allow what I have here said), that he waited on Mr. Garrick, and requested he would not suffer him, as a man of credit in private life, and an actor of estimation in public, to be destroyed by such an illiberal

* An excellent bit of character drawing.

attack on his livelihood; and as it struck at his reputation, hoped he would not permit it in future as far as regarded himself, whom it had rendered miserable. Garrick said, 'Why now, hey, Sparks! why now, hey, this is so strange now, hey, a—why Wilkinson, and be d—d to him, they tell me he takes me off, and he takes Foote off, and so, why you see that you are in very good company.'—'Very true, sir,' says Sparks, 'but many an honest man has been ruined by keeping *too good company*;' and then Sparks made his bow and his exit. Mr. Garrick, however, came to the theatre at noon, paraded with great consequence up and down the stage, sent for me, and when I obeyed the mighty summons he was surrounded by most of the performers. I fancied it had been some lucky, good-natured thought of his to serve me; but why should I have imagined so, for he soon convinced me to the contrary, as he began a fiery lecture with, "Now, hey d—n it, Wilkinson!—now, why will you take a liberty with these gentlemen the players, and without my consent? You never consulted or told me you were *to take off* as you call it:—hey, why now, I never take such liberties. Indeed I once did it, but I gave up such d—d impudence. Hey now, that is I

say—but you and Foote, and Foote and you, think you are managers of this theatre. But to convince you of the contrary, and be d—d to ye, I here order you, before these gentlemen, to desist from taking any liberty with any one of Covent Garden Theatre; and I think it necessary to avow and declare my abhorrence of what you have done, and at the same time to disclaim my consent or knowledge of it. I do not allow myself such unbecoming liberties, nor will I permit them from another where I am manager; and if you dare repeat such a mode of conduct after my commands, I will fine you the penalty of your article’—which was three hundred pounds. Here I felt myself in a fine predicament; here was a sudden fall to all my greatness, and a haste to my setting. The actors and actresses, one and all, applauded the goodness of Mr. Garrick’s heart, and sneered at the lowered pride of an upstart mimic and his imitations. I was exceedingly embarrassed and mortified, when up came to me Dame Clive, who said aloud, ‘Fie, young man! fie!’ and declared it was imprudent and shocking for a young fellow to gain applause at the expense of the players. ‘Now,’ added she, ‘I can and do myself *take off*, but then it is only the Min-

gotti,* and a set of Italian squalling devils who come over to England to get our bread from us; and I say curse them all for a parcel of Italian ——;’ and so Madam Clive made her exit, and with the approbation of all the stage lords and ladies in waiting, whilst I stood like a puppy dog in a dancing school—when Mr. Mossop, the turkey-cock of the stage, with slow and haughty steps, all erect, his gills all swelling, eyes disdainful, and hand upon his sword, breathing, as if his respiration was honour, and like the turkey almost bursting with pride, began with much *hauteur*: ‘Mr. Wilkinson! phew!’ (as breathing grand) ‘sir,—Mr. Wil—kin—son, *sir*, I say——phew!—how dare you, sir, make free in a public theatre, or even in a private party, with your superiors? If you were to take such a liberty with me, *sir*, I would draw my sword and run it through your body, *sir*! you should not live, *sir*!’—and with the greatest pomp and grandeur made his departure. His supercilious air and manner were so truly ridiculous, that I perceived Mr. Garrick underwent much difficulty to prevent his gravity from changing to a burst of merriment; but when Mossop was fairly out of sight, he could

* Mingotti was the Mara of that year.

not contain himself, and the laugh beginning with the manager, it was followed with avidity by each one who could laugh the most—and all anger with me was for a *few minutes* suspended. And certainly Mossop's Don Quixote-like manner was irresistibly diverting, and pleased every one but me, who stood all their brunts, for I did not feel myself in a cheerful mood; yet good-humour was so prevalent, that I could not refrain from smiling, and at this time can laugh very heartily whenever I bring the scene into my mind's eye. Presently entered Foote, loudly singing a French song to show his breeding, and on seeing such a group of actors on the stage, pronounced, like Witwou'd, 'Hey day! what are you all got together here like players at the end of the last act!'—then said he had called at Mr. Garrick's house, and was informed he should find him at the theatre; for he wanted to fix on two or three plays wherein he would act on the nights of his 'Diversions in the Morning.' Mr. Garrick then assumed much serious consequence, and related to Mr. Foote the state of affairs—that he had received strong representations from Covent Garden Theatre, and had, from motives of humanity and consideration, resolved to put a stop to Wilkinson's proceedings, and that Mr. Tate

must that night perform the part of Bounce only, and at his peril to disobey his orders; and that after his exit as Mr. Bounce, the piece must finish with Mr. Foote's performance, and no more Wilkinson. 'If, indeed now—if Wilkinson could have taken me off, as Mrs. Garrick says, why now as to that I should have liked it vastly, and so would Mrs. Garrick. But I again enforce Wilkinson's not appearing on my stage a second time;' and to my astonishment Foote assented: but had I been intimate or acquainted with chicanery and the mysteries behind the curtain of a London theatre (though to this hour I am not above half perfect), my wonder would not have been so great.

"I went from the playhouse in dudgeon, and retired home with a heavy mind, though only three hours before I had left my lodgings all elate, and with a heart as light as a feather. As the evening approached, I went and prepared myself for Bounce only, according to order, and when Bounce was finished retired to the green-room; but am certain both Mr. Garrick and Mr. Foote had planted persons in the house to call for Wilkinson, because Mr. Foote had not gone through half his performance when the call for me

was universal; which could not have been the case, as it was a repeated piece, and the time not come for my second appearance as usual, had not subtlety been used in the business. The clamour continued when Mr. Foote retired from the stage, and Mr. Garrick ordered the lights to be let down, which consisted of six chandeliers hanging over the stage, every one containing twelve candles in brass sockets, and a heavy iron flourished and joined to each bottom, large enough for a street palisade. This ceremony being complied with, Mr. Garrick said it would, with the lamps also lowered, be a convincing proof to the audience that all was over; but this only served, like oil thrown on flames, to increase the vociferation. On Garrick's perceiving this, he came to me in the green-room, and with seeming anger and terror asked me, how I had dared to cause a riot and disturbance in his theatre, and send a set of blackguards into the house to call for me. All I could urge in my horrid situation was, asserting my ignorance of the matter, which was of no avail; and while I was proceeding with my asseveration in *piano*, the *forte* broke out into outrageous tumult. What was to be done? I replied, I would run away; but that, Mr. Garrick said, as

matters stood, could not be suffered. ‘Foote!—Foote!—Foote!’ was echoed and re-echoed from every part of the house: he had been standing with the most perfect ease, and laughing all the time; but being thus loudly summoned, obeyed the call of duty, and on the stage instantly presented himself; and when there was interrogated why Mr. Wilkinson’s part of the farce that had been so well received was omitted. Mr. Foote made an harangue, and observed, if honoured with their patience to hear him, he would endeavour to explain, and he hoped to their satisfaction; on this silence ensued. He said, he was exceedingly sorry to have given cause for being called to an account for any motive of their displeasure. But very unfortunately what had only been humbly offered as harmless, had been basely misconstrued into wickedness; for Mr. Garrick and himself (Mr. Foote) had received remonstrances and cruel reflections from certain performers, alleging that they suffered in their reputations; and as reputations were not slender materials, in consequence thereof Mr. Garrick and himself, from motives of generosity, had yielded to such importunity and allegations, and had cheerfully sacrificed that part of the entertainment; as by so doing they added

happiness and private peace to others, however beneficial the continuance of it might have been to the theatre; and ardently hoped their conduct on the occasion, was such as merited not only the pardon, but the approbation of the audience, and which should ever be their study to merit and obtain.

“This declamation, instead of pacifying, was treated with marks of anger and contempt, and an universal cry for Wilkinson!—Wilkinson! On which Mr. Foote advanced once more, and said, as for his own peculiarities, if they could afford the least entertainment, Mr. Wilkinson was at full liberty to exercise his talents to their utmost extent; and then added *archly* (for the which I have reason to think the manager did not find himself in the least obliged), he believed, nay was assured, Mr. Wilkinson might as far as respected Mr. Garrick, without any restrictions, take the same freedom. The cry was for me immediately to appear, and that without delay; Mr. Foote promised I should be instantly produced, and took leave with a general plaudit. It may easily be supposed mine was a perplexed state, being in every point circumstanced very disagreeably, and not a friend to speak to me. On Mr. Foote’s

return to the green-room, he laid hold of my arm, and said I must go on the stage that moment. 'And what must I do when I am there?' says I. 'O!' replied he, 'anything—what you like; and treat them with as much of me as you please.' 'Aye,' but says I, 'what does Mr. Garrick say? for without his orders I cannot proceed.' 'Hey—why now—hey!' says Garrick, 'why now, as they insist, I really do not see that I am bound to run the hazard of having a riot in my theatre to please Sparks and the rest of the Covent Garden people; and if they are not satisfied with your serving up Mr. Foote as a dish—why, it is a pity, as I to-day observed, but you could give me; but that you say is not possible with any hopes of success. Why now—haste—they are making a devilish noise; and so, as you have begun your d—d taking off—why go on with it, and do what comes into your head, and do not in future plague me with your cursed tricks again.' So Sam Foote popped the *Exotic* on the stage; there was no time to be lost, as they feared bad consequences. I was afraid to go on, but on the stage I was actually pushed by Mr. Garrick and Mr. Foote, and my hair did stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine. The curtain was dropped, and the

branches also down on each side. My fright was apparent, but Mr. Town soon cheered my spirits, as there was not one dissenting voice in the whole audience. I began, and very freely, with Mr. Foote, and then was for retiring, but the cry was, 'No, no—go on, go on!' and many said aloud, 'D—n it, take them all off!' I took the hint, and was encouraged at so furious a rate, that I went through a long course of mimicry with great *eclat*, having permission, as I thought. My distress of the morning all vanished, and was exchanged for the most delightful feelings in the evening; being all elated, and on a short reflection, relying on Garrick's declaration, as the words of truth, when he had twice declared nothing could please him or Mrs. Garrick more than a well-executed likeness of himself as an actor. But note, good reader, in this point I had not acted with honour, but duplicity; for whenever he had jokingly asked me 'What sort of a subject I could make of him?' I always answered, 'I never could form any resemblance whatever; for his manner and tones were so natural, and his voice so melodious, that any imitation was impossible.' This he greedily swallowed and believed (charming flattery!); but in the close of my performance that remarkable

night, the audience were wonderfully surprised and tickled on beholding so unexpectedly a resemblance of the incomparable Roscius; which increased my spirits to such a degree, that I determine to give the audience a good meal; and, finding my first attack had made a favourable impression in their opinions, I advanced without mercy, cried havoc, and produced Mr. Garrick in three characters. And at the last line I made my finish and exit in his manner, with loud acclamations, and was all alive, alive O! But for me personally to recite these peculiarities, would give a much better idea than even the ablest pen can possibly describe.

“After this night all opposition or affront was dropped, and the enraged performers were advised to let me die a natural death, as the most prudent method; for, by opposite means, they rendered Wilkinson popular, and by not taking umbrage he would sink into insignificance. The farce was continued and gained additional force; and Mr. Foote, as he reaped the profit, was highly enraptured, and said Wilkinson was very clever. He was the general, receiving high and honorary rewards, whilst, in fact, I was merely held in rank as a poor subaltern at low pay, for standing

to be shot at. Mr. Garrick, who felt aggrieved from what he had himself desired me to do, and what I had acted by his request and permission, blamed *me* (as is natural in most cases) rather than *himself*, and not being my friend, it served to increase his spleen and dislike."

IV.

Not long after this scene he went down on an engagement to the Portsmouth Theatre, where a company of the usual *bizarre* elements had been hastily got together, among whom was a Miss Kitty White and her mother,—a strange being belonging to the race of "*actresses' mamas*"—and who is thus roughly sketched.

"Mrs. White, the mother, was a most extraordinary character, and worthy of record; far from wanting sense and observation, she was quick, lively, cunning, and sagacious, but had passions that outstripped the wind, yet good-natured at times. All this variety, as differently tuned for good or ill temper, was aided by the finest slip-slop collection of words imaginable, that made her in truth, not only to myself, but to many

others, an inexhaustible fund of entertainment, and she was to me beyond compare the most diverting old lady I ever met with. Whenever Burden, her son-in-law, gave offence, which was almost perpetually, she used thus to harangue her daughter : ‘ Ma’am, you have married a feller beneath you—you played Lucy last night in the “ Minor ” better than Mrs. Cibber could have done upon my soul, and yet this scoundrel would hurt such a divine cretur ! ’ ‘ True, mama,’ replied her daughter, ‘ but suppose he should in despair and rage cut his throat ? ’ ‘ Cut his throat ! let him cut his throat and go to the devil ; but he won’t cut his throat, no such good luck. But I’ll tell you what, ma’am, if you contradict me I’ll fell you at my feet, and trample over your corse, ma’am, for you are a limb, ma’am ; your father on his death-bed told me you were a limb. You are pure as ermind, ma’am, except with Sir Francis Dolvol (Delaval), and you shan’t live with your husband, ma’am ; you have no business to live with your husband ; the first women of quality, ma’am, don’t live with their husbands, ma’am. Does Mrs. Elmy live with her husband ? No, ma’am. Does Mrs. Clive live with her husband ? No, ma’am. Does Mrs. Cibber live with her husband ? No, ma’am. So now,

ma'am, you see the best women of fashion upon earth don't live with their husbands, ma'am.' And thus concluded one of this good lady's harangues. In short, this old gentlewoman was the delight of myself and company, and to those in particular who knew her—and her acquaintance was not confined. She pleased me so much that I should tire the reader with the subject, and make him skip from page to page, so will leave my dear Mrs. White for the present, proceed to business, and introduce, at some future opportunity, that lady into good company."

Admiral Rodney and the fleet were now at Portsmouth, and in every audience there was of course a strong nautical flavour. Trying to gratify these patrons, the following little adventure befell Mr. Wilkinson. It is a perfect picture, and told dramatically.

"On Monday, July 23, 1759, I acted Hamlet, Mr. Moody the grave-digger. As I was paying attention, in the fifth act, to Mr. Moody's grave-digger, Mr. Kennedy (the manager) plucked me by the sleeve, and said, 'Mind what you do, for Mr. Garrick is in the pit!' It rather alarmed me, but having time before my entrance to reconnoitre, and not finding any likeness I looked upon it as a

joke ; and not hearing from any person that he had been seen, and so well known, I went out to supper and staid late. But the next morning, I was waked by a messenger from the Fountain Tavern, with Mr. Garrick's invitation to breakfast ; I was of course astonished at such an unexpected visitant at Portsmouth, and wondered still more at the occasion, which in my hurried thoughts I could not devise. I instantly returned an answer that I would with pleasure wait on him, hastily equipped myself, and entered the room that great personage then graced, made my bow, and received a very hearty and friendly greeting. Here was a change ! On this wonderful greeting we were the most cordial, good, easy acquaintance that can be imagined : we chatted agreeably, for he seemed as pleased as I really was at this astonishing alteration.

“ After breakfast we walked on the ramparts, and then went to the dock-yards ; he was in such good spirits that he ordered a bottle of hock to be made into a cool tankard, with balm, &c. It was at noon in the height of summer, and the heat was his excuse for so extraordinary a draught before dinner.

“ My reader may be certain that whenever Mr.

Garrick chose to throw off acting and dignity, and was not surrounded by business to perplex him, he had it in his power to render himself a most pleasing, improving, and delightful companion.

“Mr. Garrick’s walking arm-in-arm with me was an honour I dreamed not of. He congratulated me on being so great a favourite; and what he said was of much more service, he being so well acquainted with the leading people at that place, of which, by inquiry, he soon heard all particulars: told me, he was on a visit at Dr. Garney’s, a gentleman of eminence who lived at Wickham, about eight miles from Portsmouth, to the left of Portsdown, once a physician, but had given over practising, his fortune being fully equal to ease and affluence. Mr. Garrick told me this visit had been for years promised, but not paid till now; said that Dr. Garney was an old and intimate friend, and he should be there seven or eight days: Mrs. Garrick was there, and had sent him as a messenger, with Dr. Garney’s compliments and her commands to insist that I would fix my own day, and give them the pleasure of my company, which visit they would all return. ‘So Tate,’ says my kind Mr. Garrick, ‘mind you are well provided, for we shall make it early in

next week.' This obliging invitation I gladly complied with, dressed in my best, and even of that he took notice, and said all was well except my buckles, which being (in the present fashion) large and low on the instep, he observed were like a sailor's. I did not want for lace to make me a gentlemen—not absurd then—but such a figure now would be laughed at as it passed along.

“Mr. Garrick received me at the Doctor's more like his son than merely a common acquaintance to whom he meant only to be civil and well-bred. Nor was Mrs. Garrick a jot less kind; she scorned to be outdone in courtesy, and met me with all that apparent regard as if a beloved relation had just arrived from the East Indies. She was in truth a most elegant woman:—grace was in her step. I was introduced to Dr. Garney, his lady, and son, and after that to company who were quite strangers to me. They appeared just like what were their universal well-known characters, everything that was good, with power and will to render their pleasant mansion a happy resort for their acquaintance. The situation was a little paradise in every respect that art and nature could contribute to make so; it appeared to me to much advantage, as the four immediate miles from Portsmouth till you reach Hilsey barracks, the country

is very indifferent, very dreary, and all confined; for those four miles are regular fortifications, ditches with draw-bridges, &c.

“My entertainment for the day (for I was at Dr. Garney’s before twelve) was as if calculated to please a man of fashion. As to Mr. Garrick, he, being much the youngest man of the two, took me (for two hours) to every part of the house and garden that was worth observation, and to the high top of an observatory, built by the Doctor for study, curiosity, and prospect, and very near equal to that just mentioned of Portsdown. Mr. Garrick ran and skipped about like a lad of twenty. Indeed civility and kindness seemed the study of the day from him and the whole family, and were visibly the intention and practice towards me.

“Mr. Garrick had heard my benefit was over; but when I informed him I was to have another, he strongly recommended my night to the patronage of that worthy family; and said he would take it equally as an obligation conferred on himself, if bestowed on his friend Mr. Wilkinson (there was honour!)—for I was a youth whose prosperity he had at heart, because I was deserving; and added, unless that had been his opinion of me he had not invited or recommended

me to the honour of Dr. Garney's friendship. After tea, coffee, &c., we finished the evening with playing at bowls on the green and in walking. I did not leave Wickham till ten o'clock at night, and received a general invitation to make that house my own, whenever convenience permitted or inclination prompted me. I remember when talking of plays that day after dinner, Mr. Garrick said that he never acted but to one bad house, and that was Abel Drugger, when there was not 40*l.* in the theatre.

"On my departure from this so truly agreeable day, never to be obliterated, Mr. Garrick jokingly said, he hoped there would not be any impropriety in bespeaking a play for Friday, 'and we desire, Wilkinson, you will fix on a favourite character, and do your best for the credit of both; and d—n it, Tate, Mrs. Garrick expects you will have a dish of tea ready after her jaunt, by way of relaxation; and if you disappoint us, Dr. and Mrs. Garney, and all the party will be very angry; therefore take care.' All these requests I assured him should be complied with. He escorted me to my chaise, and for the second time in his life made me very happy; for I on my part never wanted gratitude or a pride to obtain his good opinion. But our state of mind so fluctuates that

it is merely a common barometer—'*Tis true, 'tis pity, and pity 'tis 'tis true.*

“I had promised more, much more than I could make good, for I had not the least doubt but any play I appointed would be granted servilely with a bow, when authorised by the name of Garrick. Here, however, I was mistaken, for the next day when I summoned the company, the three or four theatrical potentates in power pertaining to the petty state were very refractory, each wanting to be principal on the occasion; and by a majority of votes I lost my lieutenancy; nor was I by myself, for Mr. Moody was not suffered on any account to be capital on this occasion.

“A Mr. White was the yearly Garrick, whose fame sounded and resounded from the county of Devon to the bounds of Hampshire; therefore neither he nor they would permit any display of mine, as each wanted to be a surprising actor, and be elected by due right of merit in Drury Lane house of lords and commons. Says the morning gin and brandy-cag hero, with a face unknown to cleanliness, speaking *g* affectedly, and leaving out the letter *r*, ‘Why is Mr. Wilkinson to appoint a play for this Mr. Ga—ick? Who is Mr. Ga—ick? Mr. Ga—ick has no command over our company at Portsmouth’—and with the

utmost nonchalance said, 'Mr. Ga—ick cannot, I think, be displeased with *my* Macheath, though I want no *favour* from Mr. Ga—ick'—assuring himself thereby of showing even Garrick—'*here* you shall see what you shall see,' and by that performance be engaged at Drury Lane, and make king David tremble.

"So Mr. White, who was lord paramount, after as much altercation as would settle an address to the Minister, fixed on the 'Beggar's Opera,' Friday—Macheath, Mr. White, and Mr. Moody was permitted to have the honour of acting Lockit. I was allowed to give 'Tea,' and by particular desire, to please me, was added the 'Author,' Cadwallader by me of course. It was with difficulty I could reserve twelve *good* seats, as all the genteel people, on hearing that Mr. Garrick and his lady were to be there, had crowded early to the theatre. The first act was finished and no Mr. Garrick had appeared, and on the second act beginning, the audience and the performers blamed me for having asserted a falsehood, and by way of a hum collected them to be disappointed; and I really began to think it strange myself; but to my great relief and satisfaction, about the middle of the second act, in my party came, which was to me a gratifying triumph, as Mr. White was very angry at having

played so much of his Macheath and Mr. Ga—ick not present. They were soon settled and paid much attention, and very considerately and kindly Mr. and Mrs. Garrick and their party made a point of obliging me by conferring strong marks of approbation.

“Mr. Garrick was so pleased with my friend Mr. Moody, in Lockett, that he sent for him the next morning and engaged him for the ensuing season, at a salary of thirty shillings per week, because, he told him, he *loved to encourage merit* ! Mr. Garrick, after the farce, came round and insisted on my supping with them at the Fountain Tavern ; the noble troop of strangers were much increased by the addition of several gentlemen, particularly as all the medical people of consequence belonging to the place went to pay their compliments to their acquaintances, Dr. Garney and family, and also to Mr. and Mrs. Garrick. Mrs. Garrick very politely thanked me for my performance, which before so many people certainly appeared respectful, attentive, and kind ; and I judged my fortune made. O fickle fortune !

“About half-past twelve Mrs. Garrick was for retiring, and as one of Dr. Garney’s friends had provided them beds (not suffering them to sleep

at the tavern), Mrs. Garrick had to walk up the street to her destined apartment; Mr. Garrick, who never failed in attention to his lady, would not trust her to the servant's care only, but would himself attend her, and then return back to the company. He observed I came that evening in a very large, handsome sea-captain's cloak, which he said he admired much, and he would with my leave wear it to attend Mrs. Garrick to her residence. All the ladies went at the same time to private houses, and the great little man wrapped himself in my *then* honoured roquelaure. He soon returned, said he was pleased with his walk, as it had made him so well acquainted with my cloak, and which he thought would be so comfortable for the winter, that if he had one, many a walk should he take in it, instead of going in a sedan from Southampton Street to Drury Lane; therefore requested I would not leave Portsmouth without procuring such another, and take it to London for him.

"The evening was very chatty; he had all attention paid him, and in consequence showed himself to great advantage. He asked me if I had seen '*that d—d Foote?*' I answered 'No.' To which he replied with vehemence, he hoped, for my sake, I never would, if I could avoid it, either see or

speaking to him again. What all this violent kindness proceeded from I never could account for. However, I thought then, and do to this hour think myself highly obliged; for, to the observer, it bore every mark of sincere benevolence and regard.

“It was three in the morning before the party broke up—a very uncommon hour for him; he took a most cordial and friendly leave, and I was much pleased with my affable and agreeable entertainment, and wished him a good morning, and a safe and pleasant journey to his seat at Hampton Court, for which place he was to set forward in two or three days. . . .

“My second benefit was on Wednesday—*Douglas, Tea, and Lethe*. I thought it would be rude and impolitic, when this ceremony grew near, if I did not, according to the repeated invitations I had received, wait on Dr. Garney at Wickham. I hired the handsomest horse I could, thinking that a post chaise for the day looked idle as well as extravagant for a distance of only eight miles, though not a sailor in Portsmouth but would have proved a better jockey than myself. To make which clear, I must relate my John Gilpin’s ride to Wickham, which has made me dread horseback ever since. I had seldom used myself to that

mode of travelling ; for though I had frequently gone from London to Hampton Court and Richmond, yet it was generally in a post chaise, which ever was and is my favourite method of passing from place to place.

“The ostler of the Fountain brought to my door a very fine-looking horse, and observing I wore spurs, said, ‘Pray, Mr. Wilkinson, do you often ride on horseback?’ I assured him the contrary : ‘Because,’ added he, ‘I beg then, sir, as you are not a jockey, that I may take them off, for the horse I have brought is so very spirited, it may be dangerous for you to keep them on.’ To this disarrangement I assented, and for the first mile, though hemmed in by the draw-bridges and going on gently, found it was very difficult, either by giving the horse his own way or checking him, to keep him within the power of my art of horsemanship, but entertained hopes when I got into the open road, by putting him into a canter, that I should do very well. By degrees the horse seemed wisely to comprehend that his own self-will and sagacity were superior to his rider’s ; my ignorance was manifest to the animal, and as he was fully convinced I assumed a government to which I was not by any means competent, he was

determined on rebellion, and to himself usurped the reins of power. The renewal of it to my fancy, even now, makes me giddy, and I verily believe from that hour my brain was weakened, which must plead some apology ; and it is a remark of truth, that in almost every accident, whether by falls downstairs or in the street, from six years old my unfortunate head has always suffered.

“After having achieved nearly two miles with safety, my Bucephalus set off like mad, I not being able by any means to keep my saddle, but sat in a state of fear and terror. In about half a mile, after he had got into this wild freak, in the narrow road I met the London waggon, where with care there was scarce room to pass by it, but to which this dreadful beast rushed. The wheel stopped and checked my right leg and brought me to the ground, and on my fall the horse’s hind foot struck my jaw, and made it bleed most plentifully. Providentially, the men stopped the waggon, but almost against their will, for they could not conceive, from the fury of the beast, and the supposed misguided rage of the rider, but I was some foolish mad fellow eager to show my horsemanship, neck or nothing.

“The waggoners behaved with more civility than is usual for such animals; for in general they certainly are merely such. They only damned me for *a fewl*; for they were *right zure I mun be mad to ride dumbbeast to fright the waggon like*. But when I declared my innocence, as to any intended violence on their carriage, and told them the real cause, they thought it a very good joke—and pronounced ‘I should never be a sportsman sufficient to win the King’s plate at Newmarket.’

“While I was wiping off the dust and blood, and was really much bruised, and with reason alarmed—for had not the waggoners, from seeing Gilpin’s certain danger, stopped the waggon, I must have experienced a shocking death, by being crushed under the wheels, near thirty years before this day of relation, or at best I could only have existed as a dreadful spectacle—the gay mettled courser, having disengaged himself of his rider, was all the time feeding on such odd bits of grass as he could find. I was helped on his back, and reassumed the reins with as much ease as if no accident had occurred, and I had only mounted a lady’s gentle pad.

“The waggoners desired me not to ride again like a devil upon the king’s highroad, for I might

have seen *waggon like*, and at the same time have seen there was not room to pass it; and poor beast was so quiet, it must have been all my fault. I bore this second lecture with patience, so thanked Mr. Waggoner, and proceeded on my journey; for as to dwelling longer on my ignorance, it was sufficiently explained, and would have only increased their contempt, not created pity, and therefore would be a loss of time to us all, as our journey's end was quite contrary to attain.

“I determined to be very steady, and not venture on the perilous canter any more; a gentle trot at the most was to suffice, and that with all precaution. We were jogging on, as if by mutual agreement, with great regularity and composure, when an officer, who was going to Hilsey barracks, cried out, ‘Your friend SCOTT dines at Hilsey—do come to dinner, Wilkinson,’—and went galloping on; my fiery-footed steed, scorning to be outdone in courtesy, obeyed the summons with the utmost swiftness, not by any means waiting to hear or consult my opinion as to the invitation, while, Gilpin like, I held by the pummel of the saddle out of breath, and expected every instant my neck would be broke. I was at the last gasp with this devil of a horse; for the officer had no thought

but I was determined to outride him and be at Hilsey the first. I found pulling, or holding, like Major Sturgeon, by the mane, was all to no purpose, and every moment supposed I should be sprawling on the ground; but on seeing the turnpike I cried out aloud, 'Shut the gate! Murder! murder! For God's sake shut the gate!' At first they did not comprehend me, but on observing my awkward manner of riding on this my flying-horse, and my continued cry of 'Shut the gate,' they did so before I got to it; then another fear instantly arose, which was that of the horse's despising the barred gate and leaping over it, which if he had, there would have been one Major Sturgeon less in the theatrical world; but fortunately the creature, either in pity to my fears or regard for his own limbs, or from the custom of stopping at the gate (which I cannot pronounce), halted there, and that suddenly, on a supposition, may be, that the King's duty was necessary to be loyally paid; to which he was possibly daily accustomed; and to my astonishment, in the midst of horrors, he pleasingly surprised me by so doing, for he seemed equal to any mad exploit whatever. Here I staid and got a glass of water, and from the turnpike for about a mile to the left, on the irregular paths of Ports-

down, I expected he had settled to reason, and had tried my skill in horsemanship sufficiently ; but on the up-hill and down-dale once more he began, and more swift than ever, without a chance of my meeting with any cottage, or modern shepherd or shepherdess, in case of accident or misfortune, having quite left the public road. For me to expatiate on the wonders I this day performed in the noble art of vaulting horsemanship, might make young Astley fearful of a rival, and dare me to a trial of skill. The sensible beast certainly knew what an insignificant Major he had on his back, and determined to make a frisky day of it at my expense. I was in hopes, till he took his third unlucky frolic, all would have been well, and that the headstrong servant was sensible of the errors he had already committed, and I began to fancy myself an elegant prancer, when he rapidly flew with me to a precipice of very considerable height, where I thought he would, for his own sake, have stopped his career ; but to convince me he was superior to fear, and scorned even imminent danger, down he plunged headlong to the bottom.

“ It needs not the traveller’s talent to point mine out as a frightful situation in every respect, as myself and horse had taken the dreadful plunge ; I in

idea gave up the ghost, thinking all was inevitably over, and that there was not a possibility of life being preserved; this was momentary. Ease from pain brings death, and so with me. It was, I guess, some minutes before I recovered from the shock of the fall, or to the least ray of restored senses; but, thank God Almighty, they did return by degrees, though sickness was violent, the horse still lying on my thigh, my head was on the hilly part, and the horse's feet at the bottom, which kept part of his weight from crushing my thigh.

“After finding I had so miraculously escaped with life, I was fearful, as my right leg and thigh felt so much stunned, that they were broken; but by degrees, pulling at the rough hill gently, I got my left foot equal to push on the saddle and so relieved myself, but yet doubted whether I was not in the Elysian Fields; I was in such a state of perturbation and misery, with pain, sickness, and wonder, that it was a delirium. When I was more collected, I looked at the horse, as he lay almost lifeless, and by his not making any attempt to move, I feared his limbs had suffered, and that, I supposed, would make it an expensive ride, added to my surgeon's bill. Staying there would not do at any rate, so as soon as I was able to get on my

legs I slid to the bottom, took hold of the bridle, and the horse with great difficulty arose, and was as patient as a pet lamb : I winded him round and round the rugged place as well and as gently as I could, till by slow degrees, aided by that sweet maid Patience, I got him out of the dreary depth, and once more attained a part appertaining to Portsdown Hills. Notwithstanding my third disaster, I again had courage to mount, being only about two miles from Dr. Garney's and we proceeded with all the regularity and gravity of Don Quixote to the wished-for villa, and arrived at it after all my fatigues, troubles, and hair-breadth scapes, and falling headlong down the deep Tarpeian rock. The Doctor and his son were out, and not expected home till dinner. When I had related the story of my woes to Mrs. Garney, she was greatly alarmed, and wished much for the Doctor's returning that he might immediately bleed me, which she insisted was a ceremony necessary to be instantly performed. I agreed in opinion with her ; but as the Doctor's coming might not be for two hours, I retired to be brushed, washed, &c., which was absolutely needful, and it much refreshed me. I then desired the favour of a bottle of Madeira, but Mrs. Garney did not approve of it ; and, in-

stead of that potation, recommended more harts-horn and water ; but I told her that I had, on my arrival, been well provided by her kindness with plenty of the watery element, and now really wished for something else, and thought Madeira would do wonders. She shook her head on hearing this, and went out of the room. As I was preparing myself for dinner, she politely sent me the Madeira, and I most eagerly drank a full tumbler of it, and it revived me wonderfully ; but prudence prevented my increasing the draught, for by my good will, as I was so thirsty and hot, and the Madeira had gone down so deliciously, I could have finished the bottle ; but well it was I did not, for in my hurried state of spirits, and being bruised from head to foot, it might have proved a more certain road to death than any dagger I had ever struck, or any draught of poison I had ever swallowed, as a stage patriot, for the good of my country.

“The Doctor and his son did not return till near four, above two hours after I had arrived on my prancing Bucephalus. I was well refreshed, and my face was in tolerable order, all considered, though it was much scratched and wounded. Mrs. Garney represented my story in most tragical

colours; which, had it been so well told before I had drunk the Madeira, she might have gained my consent for being bled, as I expected it after the violent fall I had endured: but on growing better, and thinking the Madeira had done everything that was necessary, all reasons or persuasions were in vain, for I obstinately refused, and said I wished for dinner, and that was preferable to being bled. At last the Doctor's kind intentions yielded to my petulance, and the sight of the good dinner seemed to be the most prevailing argument on all sides; the lancets were changed for knives and forks, and I performed with those weapons more dexterously than I or any person at table expected. We drank Mr. and Mrs. Garrick's health.

"The Doctor inquired when my benefit was; I told him: he asked for tickets, which I could not have thought of carrying there in my pocket, because a gentleman had invited me to dinner. However, he begged leave to present me with three guineas for three box tickets, which I was to send him. I accepted the king's pictures, and of course sent three scraps of paper in exchange. He desired I would come once more before I went to London: I accordingly visited that pleasant, hospitable spot again, but it was in a post

chaise, not on horseback. No more of that—no more of that.

“On my return the horse either walked or went a gentle trot all the way to Portsmouth, and when in the public road, though several gentlemen were returning from their evening’s ride, he was as easily conducted as if he had never been obstreperous. Every one was astonished when I related my adventures; and, but that they had a good opinion of my veracity, and seeing the marks on my face, and my naming the waggoners and turnpike-man as witnesses, my story would not have been credited; for the horse was so gentle, and so easily guided, they said that every one must conclude the rider was the most to blame.

“The want of judgment in me might in part have been the cause; but from the circumstance of the ostler’s taking off my spurs, it was evident he treated his riders every now and then with a frolic; and I guess his fall had made him feel pain, and find he was in an error when he cut that caper of enchantment which bereft me of my senses; and had he not had that fall I think he would have finished my career, and effectually have prevented my ever seeing old Portsmouth again.

“I do not recollect many particulars relating to

this summer campaign worth setting down, so will suppose my Portsmouth engagement ended, and greatly to my advantage. But now, though not an old man, melancholy reflection tells me that, were I to set my foot in that town, there is not one man or woman, gentleman or gentlewoman existing whom I should know. All gone ! gone ! But why should I moralise, reflect on, or regret the certain fate of all mankind ? Is there a wonder in so well proved a certainty ? ”

V.

Nothing is more pleasant than the shrewd old actor's remarks on the habits and manners of his profession : and players of our day who are addicted to what they call “gagging” might profitably consider his reflections on the subject, as well as the amusing illustrations he furnishes.

“Nothing but severe reprobation and anger will effectually cure laughing at the audience, and entertaining themselves with low jokes ; . . . and too often the manager is blamed for not preventing such impromptus, which is not in his power ; and even the females staring into the stage-boxes and smiling at their acquaintance, acting all to the pit,

not directing their discourse to the person on the stage, and Horatio, though so enjoined to attend the business of the play, employs all that time by apparently numbering the house. If the actors wish for regard, they should treat the theatre each morning certainly with the same degree of respect they would observe in the most common school-room; rehearse the play with serious attention, and not with riot and discord; thereby giving the stage opponents such full scope to exclaim, that the theatre proves itself a school of anarchy and disorder by the perpetual slander many performers bestow on their colleagues; for a rol. more in one house on a benefit than in another will raise a jealousy not to be subdued for a month. A little application to the study of authors and criticisms in general would mend many actors and actresses; but rehearsals too frequently resemble a game at school-boys' play, and instead of preparing for the stage like gentlemen, they are acting in the style and behaviour of Christmas street country mummers.

“Do not let the reader conceive the theatre such a bear-garden as to render this picture necessary for the performers in the country in general. Far from it; I am only speaking the sentiments of

liberal minds, who are hurt at seeing such vulgar and unpardonable behaviour from a few egregiously ill-bred, whom reasoning would only inflame and make their company still worse : and the audience have often too much patience when they pass over such repeated faults by too much indulgence, which the wrong-headed actor places to approbation and his own merit.

“Actors should never run into debt (a hard injunction)! for they may be assured a day of payment will be expected, and what is worse, that *one* such black sheep gives the idea of dishonesty to a whole troop ; which is very hard, and might with propriety be thrown on any other profession, that many should be blamed for the faults of a few.

“Running into debts that can be avoided lessens in every degree the actor’s darling passion, that is, his ideal consequence ; and there is another that actors incur, which manifests negligence, and is, as Mr. Garrick told Shuter, *not to be too comical*. *O comical actor ! it is a debt and a dangerous debt, not easily forgot or forgiven ; for how can the performer think that though perhaps the town last night laughed and gave indulgence, that he is free ? so far from it, he has lost the golden ore, their good opinion, and it will take a long time to regain it : for the actor is*

dreadfully wrong who thinks, because himself and friends laugh at what is termed jokes out of all time, place, and character, it is forgiven in general, and not set down against him, and mentioned for a twelvemonth at least by the judicious; and though this may be cruel, it is in some degree just, and should not be so frequently deserved. I would have all thirst for applause, but let the means pursued be professional and characteristic to deserve it.

“In London an actor must be at least near right before he is established; out of London an actor seldom gets into favour or popularity, but he too frequently in consequence leaves the right road for the wrong, that is, he studies to quit nature, and endeavours to obtain *false* applause by any means, no matter how acquired:—‘that is villainous,’ and in the end it destroys the good seeds of promise and proves a pitiful ambition in the knave that uses it, be he a tragedian or comedian; for the same ill-judged means may be practised as much almost by the one as the other. In the green-room the jokes on this occasion are ‘bringing them down;’ and ‘we have been running our lengths.’

“Laughing on the stage at our own witticisms is another lamentable, not comical fault:—not that

I would mean to be so rigid as not to allow for an accident, or once in a way, a well-timed joke, provided it suits time, place, and character. If the joke be ever so good, yet if the actor is performing as a Spaniard or a Frenchman, and reprobates either, all wit or sense is lost and the actor truly censurable."

As an illustration of the vice of such freedoms, he tells the following story, which is quite a little picture:—

"My engagement with Mossop having terminated, I intended soon leaving my old favourite spot, which was now become a home; but was detained by Mrs. Abington's requesting I would stay and assist her in a scene of fun and humour for her benefit night, which she had complied with at the request of her really good benefactor Lord Miltown. Mrs. Abington had often entertained several genteel parties with some droll stories of a good gentlewoman she named Mrs. Fuz. I had been on parties with Lord Miltown and Lord Clanbrassil, when in high spirits and good-humour, and had diverted myself and the company with stories and anecdotes of my dear favourite old lady, Mrs. White, of whom the reader must by this time have formed some idea, by referring

back to what I have before related of my darling old gentlewoman's singularities.

“Mrs. Abington had promised Lord Miltown she would produce herself as Mrs. Fuz, and she would prevail on her friend Wilkinson to do the same, as Mrs. Jenkins (alias Mrs. White); which information his Lordship made known to all the families of distinction in Dublin: but the peer did not reflect that those stories, told by myself or Mrs. Abington over the convivial table, gave a kind of explanatory key to the strange characters; and Sir Francis Delaval and Mr. Foote knew the mother and the daughters as well as myself; but on a stage, where few of the audience were acquainted either with the character that Mrs. Abington or I represented, the joke was as difficult to find out as Mr. Bayes' laughing violently at his own Prince Volscius, where the joke lay in the boots. Her play was ‘Rule a Wife.’ Between the play and farce, an interlude called Mrs. Jenkins and Mrs. Fuz. Mrs. Jenkins, Mr. Wilkinson; Mrs. Fuz, Mrs. Abington. Before the night came, we often entertained ourselves with extempore rehearsals; and conceived ourselves easy, perfect, and entertaining. Mrs. Jenkins was dressed before the play concluded. Mrs. Abington, after an epilogue

of shrewd turn, and spoke with great point, retired to dress as Mrs. Fuz; our dress had been before well considered. It was a crowded house; part of the pit laid into the boxes. Mrs. Abington had ordered an excellent supper, superbly lighted, &c., and had wrote a little introductory dialogue-scene in the street between two gentlemen, giving a description of a party they were that night invited to, and where two extraordinary characters were asked for the entertainment of the lady's guests, at whose house the rendezvous was appointed; but each person was enjoined to lay their fingers on their lips, and not to laugh on any account whatever, but to pay every mark of attention and approbation, in order that the two ladies might with more unlimited freedom display their different absurdities. After the dialogue was finished, the scene was drawn up, and discovered several well-dressed ladies and gentlemen at supper. Miss Ambrose was sitting at my elbow as the daughter of Mrs Jenkins, who intended bringing her on the stage;—Mrs. Fuz was seated at one front corner of a long supper-table, and I was at the other: Mrs. Kelf was at the head as lady of the ceremonies, which was the only good part, for there were the servants with wine, and

she displayed on the occasion her being mistress of a good knife and fork. On being discovered, and looking scornfully at each other, our two figures had for some time a fine effect; loud fits of laughter succeeded, and from these great expectations were formed.

“Mrs. Fuz then desired Mrs. Jenkins to begin—Mrs. Jenkins desired Mrs. Fuz would do the same—and we found ourselves in an awkward situation: but after a few efforts the two ladies entered into a hobbling short conversation, which was received very well, from the eager opinion that something better would follow, for the audience were all eyes and ears; but we soon flagged. Mrs. Fuz asked for a glass of wine—says Mrs. Jenkins *upon my sould* and I will have a glass of *wind* too. [One of the expressions used in this scene, and omitted here on account of its coarseness, shows on what license the actors of the day could venture.] That did not do, and the Abington began to feel it a service of danger, perplexity, and disgrace. Mrs. Jenkins called to her daughter to act Juliet, and observe her manner, and to stick herself upon the stage as if she was chilled and stabbed *throfout*: but as she kneeled down to act Juliet, the strange old lady, Mrs. Fuz, got up, gave her a kick, ran away, and

abandoned Mrs. Jenkins to the mercy of the audience; I was well aware of what might be expected, and therefore lost no time, but arose and ran after her, crying out, 'Mrs. Fuz! Mrs Fuz!' The audience began to smoke the joke, and by their tokens of anger gave the necessary hint to the staring ladies and gentlemen on the stage, that a retreat would not be imprudent if they regarded their safety; so they ran away also, which caused a laugh; for it was evident when Mrs. Abington and I had eloped, they were ignorant what to do, not knowing but that we meant to return, for they were only desired to stay on till we finished, which the performers could not conceive would be so abruptly as we made it, but expected us to come back and make a conclusion to our characters.

"I hope Mrs. Abington has not forgot this, but will laugh at it as I do; though it was truly awkward at the time, and it really drew Lord Miltown into disgrace, for he had said so much in favour of the promised scene, that it had been the conversation of the preceding week.

"When the curtain dropped, which was with loud marks of censure, the ladies universally arose, and, by way of joke, laughed and courtesied to each other, saying, 'Your servant, Mrs. Jenkins; your

servant, Mrs. Fuz!—which I dare say vexed his Lordship much, not only for his own and the disappointment of the audience, but more so, as any failure of Mrs. Abington's was mortifying to him; for he was then, and I am told is now, a most violently attached and true patron and well-wisher of hers."

By-and-by he grew weary of this life, and as we have seen became a country manager. There his character assumed a new shape, and as he got old he grew eccentric, and wrote other volumes that unfolded these fresh experiences. Every player of eminence could retail stories of "old Wilkinson's" singularities.

A young probationer, struggling on from one miserable barn to another, but who showed great promise, had written to offer his services to the York Theatre, and had but faint hopes of even a reply. To his delight he received a favourable answer :—

"Hull, February 10th, 1798.

"Sir,—As a man in the mountains and not known on 'Change, added to y^r express desire of being here, convinces me you have misunderstood my meaning, for engaging you in June next. I shall want a comedian that can strike the audience well

as to say, this will do, and *then* advance y^r situation; and as to coming into a first situation, and the business you wrote for, no such thing can be complied with. Mr. Emery is in full possession of fame and characters, so suit y^r convenience as to staying away. . . . but you will have full scope until the end of October, and then I can judge of continuance or raising of terms, according to y^r desert and success, for a good comedian only will do, if I can get him.

Yours, &c.

“TATE WILKINSON.

“Open at York on Thursday next.

“Mr. ——— Mathews, Theatre, Carmarthen, Wales.”

“Sir,—Don’t let either of us place too great a reliance. I will engage you at 1*l*. per week, until the first Saturday in June 1799. But, to promise an increase of salary, and a certain line of business, where I have much at stake, would not be prudent on my part *to give*. Therefore, as to an additional salary, or a cast of parts—unseen, unknown—I cannot think of giving any such promise, as I must cast the parts as I judge. You may have great talents—moderate, or indifferent—all which must be judged by the manager and the public.

Therefore, all the favour I have to ask is, whether you determine on being at York August the 18th. Don't neglect your interest ; but don't let me rely on your coming and then *not* make your appearance ;—may be disagreeable not only at the time, but as to other engagements. Mr. Penson leaves me in August.

“I am, Sir, wishing you every success, yours, &c.

“TATE WILKINSON.

“If you possess near the merit you lead me to expect, you must not fear a good engagement *here, there, or any where*. You are sure I wish you to please. No managers part with favourite performers, but he must wish the new ones to succeed.

MATHEWS

MR. MOUNTAIN (erased), JUN.

MATHEWS'S,

MR. MOUNTAIN'S (erased), Bookseller,

No. 18, Strand,

London.”

Here will be noticed a special eccentricity of the manager's, that of forgetting, compounding, or transforming proper names.

The young man found the company at Pontefract, and in some trepidation waited on the manager. “Come in !”—the visitor obeyed.

“Tate was shuffling about the room with a small ivory-handled brush in one hand, and a silver buckle in the other, in pretended industry, whistling during his employment after the fashion of a groom whilst currying and rubbing down a horse. It appeared that it was his custom daily to polish his own buckles; for as these particular buckles were especial favourites, from having been the gift of his friend the immortal Garrick, and were worn constantly in his dress shoes, he was chary of allowing others the privilege of touching them; in fact, he never trusted them out of his own hands. It was a minute at least before Tate took the least notice of the newcomer, who, in the short interval had opportunity to observe the ludicrous effect of Tate’s appearance, which was indeed irresistibly droll. He was still in his morning’s dishabille, his coat-collar was thrown back upon his shoulders, and his Brown George on one side, exposing the ear on the other, and cocked up behind so as to leave the bare nape of his neck open to observation. His hat was put on *side* foremost, and as forward and awry as his wig; both were perked on his head very insecurely, as it seemed to the observer.

“Mr. Mathews, after an unsuccessful cough, and

a few significant *hems*, which seemed to solicit welcome and attention, ventured at last upon an audible 'Good morning, sir.' This had its effect, and the following colloquy ensued. 'Good morning, sir,' said Mr. Mathews. 'Oh! good morning, *Mr. Meadows*,' replied Tate very doggedly. 'My name is *Mathews*, sir.' 'Ay, I know,' wheeling suddenly round, and looking at him for the first time with scrutinising earnestness from head to foot. Winking his eyes and lifting his brows rapidly up and down, a habit with him when not pleased, he uttered a long-drawn 'Ugh!' and exclaimed, 'What a maypole! Sir, you're too *tall* for low comedy.' 'I'm sorry, sir,' said the poor disconcerted youth.

" 'What's the use of being *sorry*? You speak too *quick*.' The accused anxiously assured him that he would endeavour to mend that habit. 'What,' said Tate snappishly, 'by speaking *quicker*, I suppose.' Then, looking at Mr. Mathews, he, as if again in soliloquy, added, 'I never saw anybody so thin to be *alive*!! Why, sir, one hiss would blow you off the stage.' This remark sounding more like good-humour than anything he had uttered, the comedian ventured, with a faint smile, to observe, that he *hoped he should not*

get that one—when Tate, with affected or real anger, replied, ‘You’ll get a great many, sir. Why sir, *I’ve* been hissed—the great Mr. Garrick has been hissed; it’s not very modest in *you* to expect to escape, Mr. Mountain.’ ‘*Mathews*, sir,’ interposed the miscalled. ‘Well, *Mathews Mountain*.’ ‘No, sir—’ ‘Have you a quick study, Mr. Maddox?’ asked Tate, interrupting him once more. Mathews gave up the ineffectual attempt to preserve his proper name, and replied at once to the last question, ‘I *hope* so, sir.’ ‘Why’ (in a voice of thunder) ‘arn’t you *sure*?’ ‘Ye-e-es, sir,’ asserted his terrified and harassed victim. Tate shuffled up and down the room, whistling and brushing rapidly, looking from time to time with evident dissatisfaction, if not disgust, at the object of his scrutiny; and, after several of these furtive glances, he suddenly desisted from his occupation, and once more stopped abruptly before him.

“All this was inauspicious; and, after the interview had lasted a few minutes longer, Tate strongly recommended the young man’s return to his father, and an ‘honest trade,’ as he said. All that could be gained by Mr. Mathews was the manager’s slow leave to let him enter upon his

probation and at least have a trial before condemnation."

Nothing, however, could remove the manager's prejudice, or better his opinion of the postulant, as will be seen from the following delightful and genuine communication :—

"I am dangerously ill, therefore unable to attend to theatrical grievances. After a 2^d and a 3^d time seeing y^r performance, I *aver'd* and *do aver* that *misfortune* has placed an insurmountable bar as to the possibility of y^r *ever* being capable of sustaining the first line of comic business. Mr. Emery I requested to inform you of the same at Wakefield, who was entirely of my opinion. For the *paralytic* stroke, so far from a comic effect, renders y^r performance *seriously disagreeable*. I told Mr. Hill that not all the Mirrors in the kingdom, in print or in glass, ever can establish you for a first comedian. If God wills it, it will be so, but no other order or interest can effect such a miracle. If you were to hear how you are spoken of (ask Mr Jarman), you would not rely too much on y^r unbounded applause at Hull. If you think the company is in general approv'd, you are mistaken; am sorry to be told, quite the contrary. Y^r *Rundy* is very bad indeed; so is

Motley. *Rundy* they have been used to see really well acted. . . . Do you think I engaged Mr. Hatton to hurt you? On my honor, *no*. If you say, why add to my expense? I ans^r, *necessity*, and full conviction stared me in the face. Try by degrees to be useful, and by such means get into respect. Y^r worth as a man (as far as I know) I much esteem; but as a first-rate actor, you must try some more discerning leader, and officer some other troop. I think 'Feeble Old Men' is a cast you are most likely to be *useful* in. The pain I have suffered at my breast in scratching these lines is more piercing than what you feel at the loss of *Frank*. You have youth, sobriety, and assiduity, which sometimes does wonders. Wish Emery had been more open with you. I recommended the shop, as suited to you and Mrs. M.; but he said you were so stage-bitten it would only vex you. I can only say, Stay and be happy, or Go and be happy; and ever be happy; and wishing myself better, am y^{rs} in great pain.

"TATE WILKINSON."

His rambling style of talk was, however, his most amusing characteristic; the most heterogeneous subjects being jumbled together, so as to make the whole almost unintelligible. Mathews

was fond of giving one of these monologues, from actual recollection, and it was curious and fair retribution that the successful mimic should at last come to furnish profitable subject for mimicry of others.

His extraordinary habit of wandering in conversation, with at the same time the faculty he possessed of making, to a patient and experienced listener, his meaning finally understood, may be illustrated by a curious conversation which Mathews used to repeat with great effect. He was seated in his hall of audience in a great chair, in the same uncomfortable morning costume before described—wig awry, hat, &c. At his feet reclined a little spaniel puppy, an acquisition made on the road. On the table before him lay Murphy's *Life of Garrick*, recently published, a phial of cough drops, a spoon and a wine glass, &c.

Enter Mr. Mathews.—"Good morning, sir; I'm glad to see you at home."

Tate, in a creaking tone. "Oh! good morning! Sit down."

Mathews. "I hope, sir, you've enjoyed your trip, and are not suffering from your exertions?"

Tate. "Why, as for *that*,—not but I'm glad I

went, for the weather was very fine; and, if it hadn't been for the firing of the pistols (which you know will never do for Mrs. Townend), I should have enjoyed it very much; but," he continued with gathering animation, "to be sure, Mrs. Siddons was all in all! *not but* I have a great disgust of women with blacked faces;—it's never a pleasing sight;—and the Obi women were hideous. But then her dignity was indeed wonderful! and if you ask me what is a queen, I should say, Mrs. Siddons! Still, to come into one's room when one's asleep, and run all over the bed and over one's face—ugh!—is more than any one would like, I imagine; and I have a particular horror of rats! At the same time, when they carry fire-arms about their persons, and let them off close to your ear, all through a piece, it makes your head ache; and I've such a cough, that I can't get a moment's sleep when I'm upon my back; and—what with Murphy's Life of Garrick—I really have been a great sufferer all night. I've been recommended this bottle of drops to cure me, but I've been greatly disappointed in it. It's full of blunders and lies; shamefully incorrect. I took three drops upon a lump of sugar, and it made me very sick. *Not but*—Henry Johnston,

—who, by-the-by, is a remarkably fine young man ;—but he doesn't know what he writes about when he asserts that Garrick had never played before the King. Now, at the time 'The Chinese Festival' came out, Johnston surprised me very much with his strength ; for, in the first place, he threw little *Lucky*" (meaning *Tucky*), "the black boy, over a high bank, and carried Mr. Orford, who performed *Captain Halpin*" (he meant to say, Mr. Halpin, who performed *Captain Orford*), "on his back into a cavern, lifting him up as easily as I lift this puppy, so you may suppose that he must be pretty strong ; he's thorough-bred, and he'll let you hold him up by the tail without squeaking, as you see ; but then, he's a fine pantomime actor, sir ! Still, as I said to Mrs. Wilkinson, where is there to be found such another as Mrs. Siddons ?"

The death of this worthy old actor and manager, which occurred in August 1803, was thus described by one of his players :—

"The lamentable fact of which I have to inform you is no other than the departure of our dear and truly esteemed old Tate ; who, on Thursday afternoon a little after four, was relieved from the pain he had of late so severely endured, to

receive the reward of his integrity, generosity, and solid virtue of heart.

“But I shall not panegyrise a man whose good qualities were fully known to yourself. He was completely worn out, and though he did not expire till the taper of life had long blinked in the socket, his reason and the ruling spring of all his actions, his generosity and honesty, strongly evinced themselves even to his last moments; and I fear his dissolution, though inevitably at hand, was somewhat hastened by an honest warfare in the cause of justice. Mr. Fawcett, who performed with us a week at Pontefract, previously to his coming hither, had stipulated by letter, that if the receipts at Pontefract should reach a certain sum, he should receive a compensation, but if not, he begged his services might be accepted for that week. The receipts were but poor, and of course nothing was offered Mr. Fawcett by our acting manager. On Wednesday night, Tate sent for Mr. Fawcett, and inquired of him if they had paid him for Pontefract. The reply was ‘Lord bless you, as it was bad, I told you I should not take anything.’ The old man, however, fell into a bitter passion, exclaiming, ‘Not pay you! oh, if they don’t pay you, they’ll be robbers, cheats,

plunderers; why should you not be paid?' Mrs. Wilkinson and John were accordingly summoned into his presence, and violently attacked. His passion was so extreme, that Fawcett left him in the midst of it: it continued, however, all night, and the next morning, Swalwell called Mr. Fawcett in, and insisted on his taking 25*l*. This, by-the-by, was the second agitation he underwent that night.

"The farce on Wednesday was 'The Wags of Windsor.' Tate made many anxious inquiries how Mr. Fawcett was received, as he said he had his doubts of the farce doing well, on account of the great popularity you had gained in it. He was of course pleased to hear it went off well. At the conclusion, Mr. William Wilkinson went in to him. An inquiry was made how he liked Mr. Fawcett. The answer was evasive: 'Oh, I don't know, sir.' 'Don't know, sir! and why don't you know? how did you like Mr. Fawcett in the part?' 'Oh, sir, he was very well.' 'Why, what the devil do you mean by very well? Why don't you give me your opinion why he was only very well?' 'Why, sir, I hope I may be allowed to give my opinion; I have seen Mr. Mathews in the part, and I give the preference to him.' 'Ugh! here's

a man! everybody tells me the farce has gone off with unbounded applause, and my son comes and says Mr. Fawcett was only very well.' This was the first violent fit he underwent that night.

"As the event of his death was made public directly, everybody heard it as they came from the race-ground. The poor old soul had some persuasion of his departure, and desired that the theatre might not be shut up that night, if he should die. We accordingly played to upwards of a hundred pounds, though a general gloom overspread us all. Yesterday's bills were prefaced as follows. 'York, 26th August, 1703. *In consequence of*' (a ridiculous expression, by-the-by) 'the death of Mr. Wilkinson, the trustees under his will most respectfully inform the public that they feel it to be their duty to continue the theatre open this evening, Saturday and Monday, when it will finally close until the winter season.'

"Of the purport of his will, I can only give you conjecture and report. They say that he has enjoined that none of the performers shall be discharged without a sufficient reason being apparent. But all this is only vague as to its authority. The old man is to be buried to-morrow morning at seven o'clock at the Pavement church.

Mr. Swalwell asked Mr. John whether it was wished that the gentlemen of the theatre should attend. A negative was given, and an intimation that there would be only two coaches, one for the four trustees, and the other for the three sons and Mr. Cummins. A general determination, however, prevails amongst us to see the last of our worthy old manager, every one being well convinced that 'we shall not look upon his like again.'”*

Such was the close of the long and chequered life of this excellent old player. His managerial career ended as honourably as it had been begun and supported, and there is a touch of pathos in his loyal consideration for his actors—his last wishes having a jealous regard to their interests. It is a pleasure to call attention to the merit of this obscure though worthy follower of the profession.

* The above extracts are taken from Mrs. Mathews' memoirs of her husband.

CHAPTER VI.

GREAT DÉBUTS. GARRICK—SIDDONS—KEAN.

THERE is, perhaps, no situation in life so entrancing as one of those rare first nights, when some genius has appeared and carried away the audience in a whirl of success. For the time, it seems almost a glimpse of the supernatural, and the fortunate few who have enjoyed this feeling may fairly look back to that night as one of delicious enchantment.

Associated with the London stage there would appear to be hardly more than three of these grand solemnities—of which one only was the triumph of an untried debutant. Garrick may be said to stand alone, as offering the single instance of immediate success. He had indeed made an experiment at Ipswich, but had appeared only a few times. It was at a sort of unlicensed theatre, whose rank was little above that of a music-hall of our day, that a young man, of short stature, whose name was suppressed, was announced as about to make

his "first appearance on any stage." The night was that of the 19th October, 1741. The audience was gathered from the purlieus of the East End, with a sprinkling of private friends. The play was 'Richard the Third.'

"On that Monday night the performance began at six o'clock, with a few pieces of music. Then the curtain rose on 'The Life and Death of King Richard the Third,' and after the first scene, at that nervous moment, the new actor came from the wing. Macklin always talked fondly of this glorious night—the delight he felt, the amazing surprise and wonder at the daring novelty of the whole, and yet, at the same time, the universal conviction of the audience that it was right. It was recollected, however, that when the new player came upon the scene and saw the crowded house, he was disconcerted, and remained a few seconds without being able to go on. But he recovered himself. No wonder it surprised that audience—it was so new, and was all new. The surprising novelty was remarked, 'that he seemed to identify himself with the part.' They were amazed at his wonderful power of feature. The stupendous passions of *Richard* were seen in his face before he spoke, and outstripped his words.

There was a perpetual change and vivacity. One effect at last overbore all hesitation, and the delighted audience found relief for their emotions in rapturous shouts of applause. It was when he flung away the Prayer-book, after dismissing the deputation—a simple and most natural action, yet marked with originality—and then the audience first seemed to discover this was true genius that was before them. When he came to the later defiant and martial phase of the character, he took the audience with him in a tempest of enthusiasm. ‘What do they in the North?’ was given with such electric enthusiasm and savageness as to cause a thrill to flutter round the hearers: and when he came to the effective clap-trap, ‘Off with his head!’ his visible enjoyment of the incident was so marked that the audience burst into loud shouts of delight and approbation. What a night of delight to look back to!”

On the following morning he awoke and found himself famous. His reception, said the newspapers, “was one of the most extraordinary and great that ever was seen on such an occasion.” An old gentleman of Lichfield—Mr. Swynfen—wrote down to Lichfield, to break the news to the family, in a characteristic letter. “*I was there,*” he

says, "and was witness to a most general applause he gained in the character; for I believe there was not one in the house who was not in raptures, and I heard several men of judgment declare it their opinion that nobody ever excelled him in that part." Mr. Pope—certainly a man of judgment—came to see him, and declared that nobody had ever equalled him, or would equal him. And for weeks afterwards the narrow streets of the obscure quarter were blocked up with the carriages of the nobility crowding to see him, and a dozen dukes were seen in the boxes of a night.

More interesting, however, is the story of that true heroine, Mrs. Siddons, who, passing the ordeal of a stroller's life, was admitted to the country theatres, and engaged by Mr. Garrick on the report of Parson Bate, specially sent down. The story of her failure at Drury Lane is well known; for which the jealousy of the established actresses, her own timidity and youth, with an injudicious selection of characters, were accountable. Discredited, and refused a re-engagement, as one not likely to add to the credit of the house, she had to return to the country. "It was a stunning and cruel blow," she says, "overwhelming all my ambitions, and involving peril even to the sub-

sistence of my helpless babes. *It was very near destroying me.* My blighted prospects, indeed, induced a state of mind that preyed upon my health, and for a year and a half I was supposed to be hastening to a decline. For the sake of my poor children, however, I roused myself to shake off this despondency." In short, she recommenced her country drudgery, and for several years laboured hard, winning professional admiration and the esteem of friends.

At last, in 1782, came the longed-for opportunity, and she was engaged at Drury Lane. It was a terrible experiment, she felt, for a second failure could not be redeemed.

During the whole fortnight that she was in town preparing for the night she was almost in a nervous fever. "No wonder," she says, "for my own fate and that of my little family hung upon it. I had quitted Bath where all my efforts had been successful, and I feared lest a second failure in London might influence the public mind greatly to my prejudice, in the event of my return from Drury Lane, *disgraced as I had formerly been.*" Presently the rehearsals commenced. She herself gives a graphic picture of the days that intervened. "Who can imagine my terror?" she writes; "I feared to

utter a sound above an audible whisper, but by degrees enthusiasm cheered me into a joyfulness of my fears, and I unconsciously threw out my voice, which failed not to be heard in the remotest part of the house, by a friend who kindly undertook to ascertain the happy circumstance. The countenances, no less than tears and flattering encouragements of my companions, emboldened me more and more, and the second rehearsal was even more affecting than the first. Mr. King, who was then manager, was loud in his applause. This second rehearsal took place on the 8th of October, 1782, and on the evening of that day I was seized with a nervous hoarseness, which made me extremely wretched, for I dreaded being obliged to defer my appearance on the 10th, longing, as I most earnestly did, at least to know the worst. I went to bed therefore in a state of dreadful suspense. Awaking the next morning however, though out of restless, unrefreshing sleep, I found upon speaking to my husband that my voice was very much clearer. This of course was a great comfort to me, and moreover the sun, which had been completely obscured for many days, shone brightly through my curtains. I hailed it, though tearfully yet thankfully, as a happy omen, and even now I am

not ashamed of this (as it may perhaps be called) childish superstition. On the morning of the 10th my voice was most happily perfectly restored, and again *the blessed sun shone brightly on me*. On this eventful day my father arrived to comfort me, and be a witness of my trial. He accompanied me to my dressing-room at the theatre. There he left me, and I, in one of what I call my desperate tranquillities which usually impress me under terrific circumstances, there completed my dress to the astonishment of my attendants without uttering one word, though often sighing most profoundly." The night arrived. Everything was favourable. There was a vast house, crammed to the roof, an extraordinary excitement and curiosity. The best actors remaining of the best school were to play with her—Smith, Palmer, Farren, and others. She had even the consoling support of old Roger Kemble, the old manager of strollers, who was utterly unnerved by the trial that was before his daughter. Her husband had not courage to be present, but wandered about the streets round the play-house. As she found herself on the stage she felt, she said, "the awful consciousness that one is the sole object of attention to that immense space, lined as it were with human intellect from

top to bottom and all around, it may be imagined but can never be described, and by me can never be forgotten!" She had no need to be apprehensive. It was one continued triumph. As the pathetic piece moved on there was that one centre figure taking enthralling possession of the audience. The tenderness and exquisite sweetness of her tones went to every heart, the agony of grief and suffering thrilled all present. At times she had all men's eyes suffused with tears, and many women in actual hysterics. Towards the last act there was scarcely a speech of hers but what was interrupted by tumultuous and passionate bursts of applause, until the whole house seemed swept away in transport. From that moment her success was assured in the most triumphant way. "I reached my own quiet fireside on retiring from the scene of reiterated shouts and plaudits. I was half dead, and my joy and thankfulness were of too solemn and overpowering a nature to admit of words or even tears. My father, my husband, and myself sat down to a frugal meat supper in a silence, uninterrupted except by exclamations of gladness from Mr. Siddons. My father enjoyed his refreshments, but occasionally stopped short, and laying down his knife and fork, lifting up his venerable

face, and throwing back his silver hair, gave way to tears of happiness. We soon parted for the night, and I, worn out with continually broken rest and laborious exertion, after an hour's retrospection (who can conceive the intenseness of that reverie?), fell into a sweet and profound sleep, which lasted to the middle of the next day. I arose alert in mind and body."

Her calm, steady constancy may be contrasted with the desperate straits and tempestuous victory of Edmund Kean. The history of his miserable struggle—his privations, and gallant confidence in himself all through—is familiar. One November night in the year 1814, he was playing at Dorchester. "When the curtain drew up," he says—and the reader will again note in how natural and effective a style most players relate their experiences—"I saw a wretched house: a few people in the pit and gallery, and *three persons in the boxes*, showed the quality of attraction we possessed. In the stage-box, however, there was a gentleman who appeared to understand acting—he was very attentive to the performance. Seeing this, I was determined to play my best. The strange man did not applaud, but his looks told me that he was pleased. After the play I went

to my dressing-room under the stage, to change my dress for the savage"—Kankon, a character in a pantomime—"so that I could hear every word that was said overhead. I heard the gentleman of the stage-box ask Lee, who was the manager, the name of the performer who played Octavian. 'Oh,' answered Lee, 'his name is Kean—a wonderful clever fellow.' 'Indeed!' said the gentleman. 'He is certainly very clever, but he is very small.' 'His mind is large; no matter for his height,' said Lee. By this time I was dressed for the savage, and I therefore mounted the stage. The gentleman bowed to me, and complimented me slightly upon my playing. 'Well,' said the gentleman, 'will you breakfast with me to-morrow? I shall be glad to have some conversation with you. My name is Arnold; I am the manager of Drury Lane Theatre.' I staggered as if I had been shot. My acting the savage was done for. I, however, stumbled through the part." On catching sight of his eldest child, who was suffering from water on the brain, he checked his delight; and he closes his narrative with the touching comment, "If Howard gets well, we shall all be happy yet."

Within a week the child died, and though the

grand dream of his life was about to be accomplished, this loss seemed to make him indifferent. "The joy I felt," he wrote to Drury Lane, "three days since at the flattering prospects of future prosperity is now obliterated by the unexpected loss of my child. Howard, sir, died on Monday morning last. . . . This heart-rending event must delay me longer in Dorchester than I intended. Immediately I reach London I will again, I hope with more fortitude, address you."

When he reached town his appearance, and some other reasons, discouraged the manager. He was treated coldly by actors at the single rehearsal which was hurried through on the morning of his performance. The stage-manager listened contemptuously to the new actor, and declared that "it wouldn't do." At the close all shrugged their shoulders, and announced that failure was certain.

"The rehearsal concluded," says Mr. Hawkins, his biographer, "Kean returned home to enjoy with his wife the unusual luxury of a dinner. He remained at home until six o'clock, when the striking of the church clocks warned him that it was time to depart. Snatching up a small bundle containing the few necessaries with which he was

bound to provide himself, he kissed his wife and infant son, and hurriedly left the house. 'I wish,' he muttered, 'that I was going to be shot.' With his well-worn boots soaked with the thickly encumbered slush, he slunk in at the stage door as if desirous of escaping observation."

Everything was against him. The night, as the whole day had been, was wet and miserable. He paddled through the mud and slush, and arrived, wet through, at the theatre, where he silently crept to a dressing-room, of which he was allowed only a share; dressed himself, to the amusement and even contempt of his fellows, who noticed that he was putting on a black, instead of the traditional red wig of Shylock. The stage-manager did not remonstrate—giving him up as hopeless. He hardly spoke to him.

Two good-natured actors—Oxberry and Banister—alone gave him some encouragement; the former offered a glass of brandy and water. When dressed, he went to the wing, and saw an empty, cheerless house—in the pit, about fifty persons. Then the curtain rose. Soon the audience began to waken to enthusiasm, and by the end of the first act, there was an instinct behind the scenes that genius was present, and that a success was at

hand. The players began to gather about him and congratulate, but he shrank from them with a look, and withdrew into concealment. From that moment the enthusiasm rose, the theatre began to echo with prolonged shouts. "What now," says Dr. Doran, in a spirited passage, "was the cry in the green-room?" The answer was that the presence and power of the genius were acknowledged with an enthusiasm that shook the very roof. "How the devil so few of them kicked up such a row," said Oxberry, "was something marvellous." As before, Kean remained reserved and solitary, but he was now sought after. Raymond, the acting manager, who had haughtily told him that his innovations would not do, came to offer him oranges. Arnold, the stage-manager, who had 'young man'd' him, came to present him—"Sir"—with some negus. Kean cared for nothing more now than his fourth act, and in that his triumph culminated. As he passed to the sorry and almost roofless dressing-room, Raymond saluted him with the confession that he had made a hit; Pope, more generous, avowed that he had saved the house from ruin."

"The pit rose at me!" was his own description. Trembling with agitation and excitement, he took

off the Jew's dress and resumed his old, old threadbare suit, turned disdainfully from the genuine applause of his fellow-actors, and left the house. Through the wet and slush he rushed home, flew upstairs, and clasped his wife in his arms. He poured out the story of his triumph. "Mary," he cried, "you shall ride in your carriage! And Charley, my boy,"—and he turned to his infant—"you shall go to Eton!" Here his voice faltered, and he murmured the name of the child he had so recently lost.

There is nothing in the whole round of the plays so dramatic or so thrilling as this.

END OF VOL. I.

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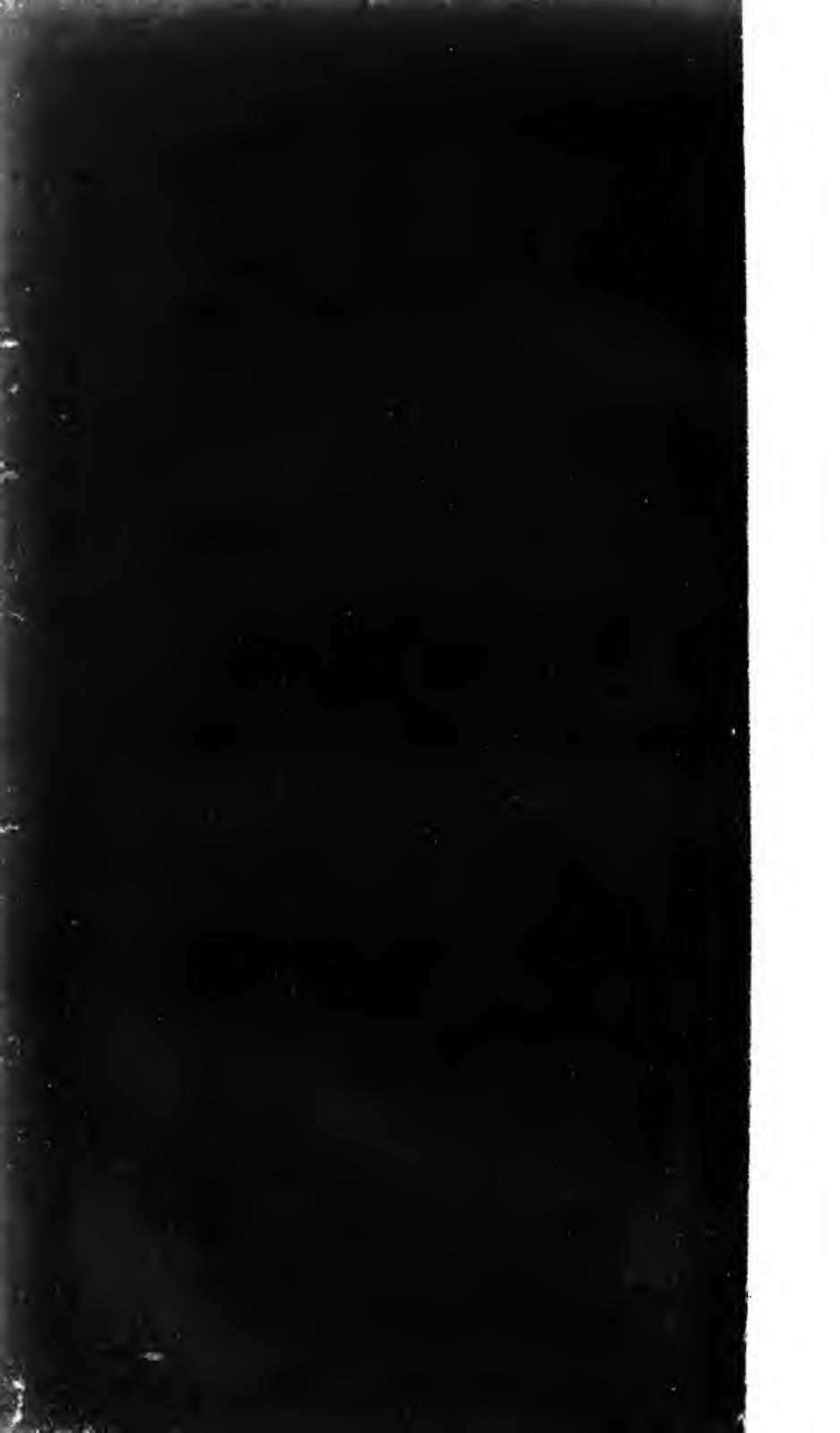
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